ROME FROM THE INSIDE;

OR

THE PRIESTS' REVOLT.

Compiled and translated by
'J. B.', of 'The Christian World.'

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JAMES CLARKE & CO.,
Fleet Street. 1899.
SHILLING.

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

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Brierley, Jonathan

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

The following pages, which consist mainly of translated extracts from the French journal, *Le Chrétien Français*, have been published in their present form under the belief that, in addition to containing some "human documents" of more than ordinary interest, they form a contribution of exceptional importance to the present Romanist controversy in England. The pamphlet may be described in brief as a record of the new revolt in the French priesthood. Its contents are chiefly letters and addresses from priests and ex-priests. These, it will be recognised at once, are a testimony of the very first order as to what modern Rome really stands for in relation to spiritual life, to morality, and to intellectual progress.

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The value of the evidence comes from the fact that it is from men who speak from the innermost centre of the Roman system. It is that of men who were brought up in the bosom of Rome, whose minds from infancy were moulded by her teachings and associations; who have ministered at her altars and wielded her powers; whose family relationships, hopes of advancement, and entire worldly interest were bound up in adhesion to her, and who, spite of all, have found her yoke intolerable.

These witnesses are allowed here to tell their own tale in their own way. What they say needs little comment, for the moral is sufficiently plain. At a time when a great party in the National Church is straining every nerve to bring back the Roman domination, the English people are here invited to study a first hand and authentic revelation of what the system is for which they are now invited to give up the liberties their fathers won.

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ROME FROM THE INSIDE.

I.

A CHAPTER OF A LIFE.

In the remarkable movement amongst the French Catholic clergy which we here propose to chronicle, a foremost place must be given to M. André Bourrier, ex-Abbé of Marseilles, now the editor of the *Chrétien Français*, and one of the first to take the step of resignation of the priesthood, in which he has since been imitated by so many. What follows is a portion of the statement made by him at his consecration as a Protestant pastor in the Eglise de l'Etoile, Paris, where before a crowded and breathless auditory he gave this moving "Chapter of a Life." Its testi-

mony is the more striking from the evident affection which M. Bourrier still bears towards the Church of his youth, and his desire to say all that can be said in her defence.

M. Bourrier having first recited the words of Psalm xvi. 5, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup," said:—

Such are the words which the Church of Rome places in the mouth of its young men when they take Holy Orders. Such are the words which I repeat to-day in order to express the engagement which I am entering upon to serve the Lord in the Reformed Church of France.

The consecration of my whole life to the service of God does not date from to-day. I consider myself as irrevocably engaged ever since the day when, on my knees in the sanctuary, and at the foot of the altar, with my hand in that of the Bishop, I pronounced the solemn oath, "The Lord is my portion and my cup." Twenty-six years have passed since I made that vow, and I can at this moment state with all sincerity that, in spite of the weaknesses inseparable from human frailty, I have faithfully

served my God with the devotion I promised to Him in the flush of my ardent youth.

The act, then, that I have just accomplished is not to me a new one. At the age of forty-six I have but renewed the vow which I made at twenty, but I have renewed it with the experience and enlightenment that my life has brought to me.

On the first occasion it was in another Church, and with a different confession of faith. The Church of Rome was my first mother, a mother tender and devoted. She tended me with a jealous care; and in conferring on me the sacerdotal consecration she honoured me with her highest dignities. On the 23rd of May, 1875, I knelt on the altar steps of the Cathedral of Marseilles, and received the imposition of hands from him who has since become His Eminence Cardinal Place, and from a numerous clergy. The next day, the 24th of May, I ascended the altar for the first time, and celebrated the Sacrament of the Mass! Never-to-be-forgotten day! All was joy around me, and I hardly could keep back my tears. At that moment I dreamt of naught but sacrifice, devotion, martyrdom even, for a Church which

entrusted to me an honour so great. I served that Church with faithfulness and love, devoting to her interests youth with all its ardour, and for her sake renouncing the joys which the world regards as the purest and most legitimate.

My first efforts in the Church were productive of a prostration which, after ten months of ministry, forced me to abandon my parish and to go into retirement. I resumed my office as soon as my health allowed me, and I threw myself with enthusiasm into all the manifold works which Rome's able organisation is ever prosecuting. Catholic circles, work amongst the young, associations of all kinds drew on my energies, and the more that all this time I ever confounded the glory of my Church with that of God. And in these diverse functions of my ministry I do not hesitate to say I constantly found joy, peace, and ineffable consolation. I was doing good; I was fulfilling my duty; I was happy. Had the world offered me its most envied gifts in exchange for my priestly crown I should have indignantly refused them.

In return the Church imposed certain obligations upon me—celibacy, the Breviary—obedience! Celibacy I accepted willingly and joyfully, despite the many

harassing struggles, whose secrets God alone knows. I never thought of revolting against a Church which, as I now recognise, imposed on my generous and ignorant youth that which ought to remain in a man's own choice and guardianship. I am speaking here, remember, only of what actually concerns myself. And now that the first ardour of youth has passed, and I have arrived at an age when I know more, I have still to say that I find in my heart no special revolt on this account against the Church of my childhood and my youth. I have seen around me scandal and shame; I have listened to complaints only too legitimate, to maledictions too awful to think of; I have received the most terrible confidences; I have seen many victims. Yet, at the same time, I have seen many happy faces, I have listened to gracious voices whose words were a benediction; I have known many who accepted this discipline for "the kingdom of heaven's sake." They understood because they were numbered amongst those "to whom it is given." I remain, then, with those who do not protest on this account.

As to the Breviary. Every day of my life I recited it, and every day with gladness. Apart from certain blemishes I

always found in it rays of faith, of piety, of holy enthusiasm which lifted me above the worries of life and transported me into prayer's serenest realms. This rich store is also made up largely from the treasures of the Holy Scripture. It is often my practice to-day to open it with emotion and to draw from it the foundations of my prayer. As to my obedience to my Bishop, I wish again to make it known from this Christian pulpit that, as far as *I* am concerned, the Episcopal authority has always been of a tender and paternal nature, so much so that my orthodoxy has never been suspected. I must acknowledge also that all around me, so far as my observation extended, this authority was exercised with moderation and wisdom. It has always appeared to me to be a salutary institution for the peace and proper administration of the Church.

In the pastoral ministry, where I have laboured for twenty years, I have met consolation and joy such as it seems to me impossible to find elsewhere in the world. The Catholic Priest would seem to you to be much pitied because he has never known family joys. True, I am ignorant of these joys; yet, in spite of my ignorance, I can, however, proclaim that I have found in my

parish the joys of a spiritual family, of bonds cherished and sacred, which wound themselves round the innermost parts of my being. I realised all this to its depths on the day when I had finally to break with my Church. I mourned then my spiritual family with tears as bitter as those which, a few months later, I shed over the coffin of a beloved father and mother.

But, spite of all this, a day arrived when I was no longer at peace. Doubts took possession of my mind. My Church forbade me to doubt, yet I was unable to prevent myself from doing so. All my history lies there. I have confessed many a priest and many of the faithful in my lifetime. Often in the Confessional have I heard this sorrowful admission, "Father, I accuse myself of having held doubts about the Faith." They *accuse* themselves of doubting because in so doing they disobey. Their faith comes neither from the heart nor from the mind; it is surely in the will which bends the knee to the ridiculous.

And therein lay my crime as a priest. I believed that doubt was to be repulsed by the light of intelligence, and not by the violence of the will. I demanded light

from my intellect, the only beacon light that God has given to man for his guidance; and as I recognised the insufficiency of human power, I searched for this light in God's own Word. I opened the Gospel This Gospel the Church of Rome had caused me to venerate as a Divine book, Divine to such an extent that simple human intelligence could not penetrate into its secret. And I came to believe that this Book was not written solely for the benefit of pontiffs who pronounce oracles. At the head of each of its writings I saw that they were addressed to men, to sinners like myself, to the uninitiated such as I, to Jews and to heathens, to free men and to slaves. And I said to myself that if the Christians of the first century had found therein Light and Life, I, also, might in my turn find here the peace of which my thirsting soul had need. And then I opened this Gospel, which I have read and re-read so many times. I opened it still again, this time without prejudice, without theology, but with the humility of a little child who asks his father to teach him. And amongst many other words which were a revelation to me, I came across one which has been my salvation "Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between

God and man." "Neither is there any other name given among men by which we must be saved."

Oh, the enlightenment and the power of the day on which I understood these words Between the Heavenly Father and myself I have ever since known but one Mediator, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ alone for prayer; Jesus Christ alone for the ascent heavenwards; Jesus Christ alone to send down pardon and peace. With Jesus Christ realised as the only Saviour we can say good-bye to priests, to masses, to meritorious works, to indulgences, relics, scapularies, and chaplets, to miraculous Virgins, holy Anthonys of Padua, and even "Sacred Hearts." Between heaven and earth a cross; nought but a cross, divinely sufficient to reach to the heights of heaven, sufficiently human to descend to the depths of my misery, and to bring to me pardon and peace.

I had henceforth in my heart a holy zeal for Jesus Christ, and it was by this portal of zeal for my Saviour that I took my departure from the Church of Rome. It is true that enlightenment did not come all at once. Many were the heartrending struggles alternating in victory and defeat.

In the end, however, conscience triumphed. One day I had the strength of mind to break the bonds, which were at once the strongest and the sweetest flesh and blood could know. On the 31st of August, 1895, I handed my resignation to my bishop. It was the anniversary of my natal day. It were useless to unfold to you my anguish and my grief. I went for the last time to kneel in the sanctuary where I had said my first Mass, and which I passed on my way to the station. There I prayed and I wept, when suddenly a great calm took possession of me, and I seemed to hear a voice which said, "Press forward! Do thy duty! I am with thee!" Then I went out.

But this was not all. I must find a home for my conscience, an abode for my Christian heart; I must have a Church. I at first sought a Church elsewhere, I admit, than in that which I have the honour of entering to-day. I sought a Church which should most closely reproduce the image of that which I had lost. I would fain cherish the illusion that I had not changed all in rejecting certain errors and certain superstitious practices. It was a chimera, inspired, no doubt, by the relics of a filial affection for the Church of

yesterday. I sought in vain; I even went so far as to look across the frontiers; and it is only by a succession of halting-places that I have reached the Reformed Church of France.

There I found the two great principles which must act as the basis of all Christian belief—the authority of the Gospel and justification by faith as the only means of salvation. God revealed by Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ known by the Apostles, the only authentic interpreters of the preaching of Jesus. I have found since that time the inner religion, the religion of the Gospel grasped by the conscience, which Luther has so justly spoken of as "the conscience bound by the Word of God." It was then that I really came to you. And I soon found myself in a new home; I was no longer an exile; I had a mother; I was no longer an orphan.

Meantime another question opens to-day before me. I look beyond personal considerations to ask when France, disillusioned from error and superstition, shall return to the Gospel? How can I forget these "separated brethren," brethren always spite of this separation? How can I especially forget that army of priests who to-day from all points of France are writing

me such touching letters, opening up such mournful confidences, addressing to me such pressing appeals? Yes, I affirm it, and am here to declare it, that there is to-day in France amongst the Catholic clergy a great lassitude and disgust, an immense aspiration after reform, after a primitive Christianity, after a genuine Gospel renewal. What is to be done? French Protestantism, it is clear, has a great and glorious mission to fulfil. As a depository of the Gospel amongst an ignorant and pagan multitude it is like the small nation of Israel charged to guard the world's hope and faith till the day of illumination. For me, "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." That is the word which has pursued me for long years. In the enervating idleness of the sacristies and the sterile activity of the Roman ministry, this voice incessantly stirred my conscience. And now it is for me to preach the Gospel and nothing but the Gospel.

For the moment my sensation is one of glorious liberty. I sing with the Psalmist, "My soul is escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowler. The net is broken, and we have escaped." O glorious liberty of the children of God, I have known thee too late! I have loved thee too late! Yet

blessed be the God who has delivered me! Blessed be the Gospel which has given me freedom! Blessed be the Church which has welcomed me! Blessed the brethren who have received me and pressed me to their heart!

II.

A DISILLUSIONED PRIEST.

Following hard on the steps of M. Bourrier in the new priestly movement was M. Victor Charbonnel, a priest whose high intelligence, brilliant University distinctions, and splendid oratory made a great career certain for him in the Church had his conscience permitted him to remain there. Referring to the letter of resignation which follows, M. Bourrier says: About eighteen months ago I met the Abbé Charbonnel for the first time with reference to an article which he had published in the *Eclair*, and to which I had replied in the same journal. I wanted to demonstrate to my *confrère* the impossibility of the generous delusion which he at that time cherished — the reconciliation of Liberalism with Rome. The abbé listened to me in silence, but to-day he brings me the

reply which of all others I could have wished :—

M. CHARBONNEL TO HIS BISHOP.

YOUR EMINENCE,—In devoting myself, in the ardent sincerity of my youth, to the service of the Church, my one wish was to give my life to God.

Many and sorrowful experiences have, however, brought me to the conclusion that to serve the Church, or the men who, amongst us, pretend to govern it, is in no way to serve God.

For the future I cannot without a too painful inner reproach keep up the appearance of unity with an ecclesiastical organisation which makes religion a mere engine of administration, a dominating force, a means of intellectual and social oppression, a system of intolerance, and which fails utterly to recognise its true character as prayer, the lifting up of the heart, the search for a Divine ideal, a moral support, a principle of love and brotherly kindness; which, in a word, has turned religion from an ennobling faith into a miserably human policy.

In the free loyalty of my own conscience, and for the peace of my soul I believe it my duty to make it known to your Eminence

that I am no longer of the clergy, that I am no longer of the Church.

Deign to accept, &c.,

VICTOR CHARBONNEL.

ROME AND THE BELGIANS.

Since his escape from Rome M. Charbonnel has been actively engaged in preaching and lecturing in France and Belgium, and with immense success.

The disastrous influence of Rome upon the religious life of the masses is abundantly shown in the results of this tour. In Belgium people who had been called, and called themselves, Atheists crowded his lecture-halls to the doors, saying to him at the close, "Our hatred of the priest had made us hate his God; but you reconcile us to a religion which is free."

M. Charbonnel is a dangerous man to encounter, as his clerical adversaries are finding to their cost. They had circulated the statement that he had married, and that it was for this he had left the ranks of the clergy. He was interpellated as to this piece of news by a Catholic

newspaper editor of Liège. The following was his reply:—

Ah, a woman, is it, my Tartufes! You really believe, then, that it was for a woman that I left the ranks of your clergy and of your Church! What divine simplicity! As if one could not find a woman without leaving you, without going out of your confessionals, your sacristies, your chapels! And when you are found out how cleverly you cover all up! While as for the renegades, you make a clamour with your pity for their scandals which do not exist at all except in your own proper, or rather improper imaginations.

The retort was lively, but it fitted the accusers and the company, and what is more, it fitted the facts of the case.

III.

A SUFFOCATING CHURCH.

The following letter of resignation, written to his Bishop by M. Vidalot, curé of Arabaux, gives vivid expression to that sense of being exiles from their own century, and aliens from the common life of their age, which is evidently pressing the more enlightened priesthood almost to madness.

Arabaux, 25th Oct., 1897.

Monseigneur,—I have the honour to inform you of my resignation as the Curé of Arabaux, and as a member of the diocesan clergy.

For many years my consciousness as a priest has maintained a war against my reason and my heart, into the details of which I cannot here enter. If I did this letter would be stained with my tears.

I can no longer maintain this conflict without imperilling the existence of the

best that is in me. Ten years of ministry have sufficed to dissipate all the illusions and all the hopes of my youthful service. I *had* seen in the priest the highest incarnation of the apostle; in the Church, Jesus Christ Himself teaching and saving in liberty and in love.

Now I see in the priest only a man, condemned to live outside his generation, on the borders of the society he traverses, unpopular and crushed by the sense of an irremediable powerlessness. Modern in all his aspirations, and feeling the need of modernising his apostolic charge, he is yet forced by the nature of things to live a life of silence, of routine, and of memories.

In the Church temporal pretensions have taken the place of a Divine mission; dogmas have ousted thought, and ritual has caused the worship of the Spirit and of the heart to be forgotten.

I am suffocated in this Church which is made up of nought but ritual and formulas. I have need of air and of freedom. I take my departure, carrying my faith with me, firmly believing that it will be able, outside the Roman Church, to reconcile itself with the lawful aspirations of my reason and conscience.

I ask God to enlighten me in the new path that I am treading; it is to Him I look for strength and guidance.

Deign to accept, Monseigneur, &c.,

ALBIN VIDALOT.

13, Boulevard de Port Royal, Paris.

IV.

A CRY OF DESPAIR.

The following letter to M. Bourrier is from the curé of a country parish. It is a transcript doubtless of what is passing in innumerable clerical bosoms. After stating his admiration of the priests who have had the courage to come out of the Roman Church he continues:—

I have for long wished for such a courage. I admire, but I am, alas! unable to imitate it. Where in such a case is one to go, without resources, incapable, with our special formation of character, to undertake any other career? And then the scandal! All that mass of received ideas, of stupid and tyrannical prejudice, of which the public spirit is made up; that opinion so adroitly fashioned by the Church to prevent those whom it has once seized as a prey from ever escaping. *Tu es sacerdos in æternum.* Every man may change his

career if he recognises that he has deceived himself in entering it; the priest never. "He cannot be deceived. His vocation, sealed with the stamp of his superiors, is the special work of God."

You know better than I these pitiable arguments. But unjust, false and ridiculous as they are, they have formed the spirit of the public for ages, and it is this prejudice which makes the barrier insurmountable. Then there is the family: a family of humble village peasants, imbued with the same ideas and whom one's defection would plunge into inconsolable grief. What can one do? Where go? What is the issue? Nothing, nothing. We must just stop where we are—in irons, in anguish; stay there, to sleep and to die!

V.

ROME AND THE GOSPELS.

The following, addressed also to M. Bourrier, is of a different character:—

. . . . Meantime I am following your advice. I am working. I have already read several times over the Gospels and the Epistles, and have been surprised to find there things which I never suspected. Your little work has discovered to me the true point of view. Looked at from this point everything is explained, takes its true place, and enters into its proper proportions. Christ came to announce the coming of the Kingdom of God and to prepare men for it. The Apostles continued this work. . . . In the simple and pure beliefs of the first Apostolic age there were no dogmatic excrescencies, no elaborately wrought-out system; it was *life* rather than *theology*. There was no cult of Mary, of angels, of saints; no priesthood, because there was no sacrifice.

There were missionaries to preach the Gospel (*apostoloi*), guardians of morals and of doctrine (*episkopoi*), ministers to serve tables (*diakonoi*). Here was the whole hierarchy, the whole organisation of the primitive communities. This is what a simple study of the New Testament reveals. Without popes and councils, without canons and encyclicals, we arrive ourselves at these truths; sufficient if we open our eyes and look around without prejudice. . . .

None of the ecclesiastics to whom I have propounded my difficulties have been able to resolve them. Neither Cornelius a Lapide, nor Menochius, nor the whole rusty arsenal of scholastic arms avails. They are obliged either to deny the evidence of the texts or to take refuge behind the infallibility of the Church, that rampart which serves as a shelter for every kind of ignorance. My neighbour, the Abbé G——, and I are beginning to make some stir in our neighbourhood. Unfortunately, the time is past when heretics were burned, or we should run imminent risk of being roasted alive. The Catholic priest, as you know, does not admit any doubt in a matter of faith; he believes without examination on the word of the Church, which

can neither deceive nor be deceived. People in such a state of mind can accept anything; the more absurd it is, the more is it credible. It is simply a waste of time to argue with such. And, after all, one can hardly be angry with them, for the Catholic priest has no place in life apart from the Church which has formed him. Out of the Church he is good for nothing.

VI.

ROMANISM AND THE PEOPLE.

M. Cornelout, an ex-priest, describing a remarkable Protestant work which has broken out in the region of Saintonge, and which has resulted in the formation of numbers of Evangelical churches, comments as follows on the fatal results, as regards religion, amongst the French people of the work of the priests:—

What is in France the situation of the Romish Church, in what concerns the religion of the conscience? The answer is, Indifference has penetrated everywhere. There are still fervent Catholics, especially amongst women, of whom I have known admirable examples. But how many? I know that different districts present different characteristics; but speaking generally the mass of the people, in the country as well as in the towns, no longer believe in and no longer hold to the Church. And the situation gets worse every day.

How often have I seen this stated in episcopal addresses; how often have I heard *curés* sadly making the same confession! How does this come about? Relying on my experience, first as a parish priest, then as a missionary priest, and finally as a Protestant Evangelist, I would answer: The people (and by this I mean the generality) no longer believe, because they are asked to accept things which revolt at once their conscience and their common sense. The Gospel, the mighty faith of the first fathers of the Church, has become a mass of infantile and ridiculous devotions. Saints, more or less authentic, less generally than more, have taken the place of Christ.

The Church has put on the same footing the violation of the commands of the Decalogue and that of its own ordinances; to eat a little bacon on a Friday is as much a mortal sin as to assassinate a fellow creature. Into the head of a child of ten or twelve years the Church crams pell-mell, amongst some evangelical truths, a set of absurd teachings about the infallibility of the Pope, about confession, indulgences, relics, pretended miracles, &c. This is what is called the Catechism. But the fatal hour sounds when the reason claims again her rights; she will not and she cannot

blindly accept everything. Hence reaction and revolt. The priests are the last to recognise this. Fashioned by able masters, habituated to accept, with their eyes closed, everything that comes from Rome, they fail to recognise, they will not recognise that Rome herself is responsible for the prevailing indifference and unbelief.

M. Corneloup adds:—

Yet the people are not fundamentally irreligious. The proof is seen in the Protestant progress to which I have just alluded. Present the Gospel to the people; nothing but the Gospel, without human additions; show them that their objections to the Romish Church are of no weight against the Gospel; avoid binding their consciences by human decrees miscalled infallible, but instead make them hear the Word of God; place them face to face with God Himself, teach them to hear Him, and you will see indifference disappear. The people will accept the Gospel because it satisfies the reason, the heart, and the conscience. Our work of evangelisation is everywhere succeeding: it will succeed yet more in proportion as it frees the people from the old prejudices which the Church has everywhere sown amongst them.

VII.

A YOUNG ABBÉ'S STRUGGLE.

M. L'Abbé E. Bourdery, formerly curé of Marolles, in the diocese of Beauvais, was ordained priest in 1890. He belonged to the young Catholic school which, accepting the theory of evolution, explains all dogmas and keeps the peace with councils and papal encyclicals by the infinite resources of an adroit and subtle interpretation. But his upright and sincere mind found itself too much troubled at length by these dexterities of a science too subtle to be Christian and too adroit to be evangelical. The result was that on the Thursday of Holy Week, the 7th of April last, he sent in his letter of resignation to his Bishop. In the evening, when the congregation was gathered for the rendering of the *Stabat*, he came in surplice and stole into the choir to commence the ceremony. While

the people were singing he returned to the sacristy, placed his surplice and stole on the credence, and reappeared in the choir, but this time in black. Then, not from the pulpit, which he felt was no longer his place, but from the steps of the altar, he read to his parishioners the letter he had sent to the Bishop. His people showed him the liveliest sympathy, and congratulations came to him from the most unexpected quarters. The Bishop sent a professor of the seminary in which M. Bourdery had been educated, and who had been one of his close friends, to win him back again. A painful struggle ensued, in which the heart more than the head of the young abbé was appealed to. But he held firm, and the victory remained with reason and conscience. The following is his letter of resignation:—

MONSEIGNEUR,—A sincere vocation led me to the priesthood in the religion of Christ. After a long and serious study of the dogmas and institutions of the Church, I have recognised that I can no longer remain a priest. It is due to my sense of loyalty no longer to sustain the oversight

of the parish you confided to me. I therefore to-day place my resignation in your hands. I can render this testimony before God, that all my life as a priest has been fully given to spreading and developing the Christian sentiment in the minds of the people. And it is to continue this work that I have separated myself from your Church, which is Catholic but not Christian. May the Son of God, who has revealed Himself in my heart, hungry for truth and life, deign to console those whom I am quitting. Later they will understand how deep are the convictions which I have obeyed. They will realise, as I have done, that the social organisation of Catholicism is simply the recapture by Judaism and by the Roman spirit of domination of the Christian principle of the filial love and liberty of the children of God, and they will not condemn me for freeing my own faith and for affirming against a Church blindly authoritative and oppressive the rights of my conscience. May the Son of God console and strengthen me! The break which I am now making is not without painful and crushing sorrows. But duty is man's affair, and the future God's. My feeling is that I have acted loyally, in the simple performance of duty, and that

therefore I may have confidence in God, who is Master of the future. I ask you, Monseigneur, to pardon me the pain which I am giving you, and to accept the expression of my deepest respect.

E. BOURDERY.

The resignation of M. Bourdery, coming after so many others, at last fairly roused the French Press to the significance of the new movement. Articles appeared in a large number of the most influential journals commenting on it. The reason for the priestly revolt was in more than one instance stated to be the influx into France of American Catholic ideas, and also the influence of M. Auguste Sabatier's "Sketch of the Philosophy of Religion," which has been much read by the clergy.

VIII.

CONVERTED BY A CARDINAL.

HERE is the life-story of Theodorit Audouard, ex-curé of St. Chaptes (Gard):—

I also am "an escaped one," having cast off my frock four years ago. When a bachelor in theology I was preparing to be licensed, when one day, after having studied a thesis of Cardinal Perrone, I closed the book exclaiming, "I am a Protestant!" For a long time my conscience had been troubled by doubts and repugnances which made me suffer terribly. The superstition, the idolatry, the false morality of casuistry, the abuses of the hierarchy, all this revolted me and rendered most painful the functions of a ministry which condemned me to a life of hypocrisy. To renounce my profession, the exercise of which was so repugnant to my sincerity, was the idea that secretly haunted me. After a long hesitation I took the final step when my bishop pro-

posed to transfer me from my curé of St. Chaptes to that of Saint-Hilaire de Brethmas in June, 1894. I flatly refused to go, and returned to secular life. Since then I have resisted all the inducements held out to make me resume the priesthood, and have remained faithful to my conscience. I have lived by the work of my own hands in my little village of Saint Victor la Coste. I am humble and poor, but happy, never regretting the soft, easy life of the past.

At the same time, now that I hear of ex-priests who have at heart the noble ambition of rescuing France from the yoke of superstition and of the hierarchy, and to win her to the Gospel of Christ, I feel once more stirring in me the apostolic vocation, the desire to unite with these valiant *confrères* in this great work. I am a Christian; I say it with all my heart and with head erect—a French Christian. Because I am Christian, I am no longer a Catholic. I am no longer Romish because I am French. To fight Roman Catholicism and to labour at making France Christian is the work at once religious and patriotic to which I desire to consecrate the rest of my life.

IX.

WHAT THE LAITY ARE THINKING.

The following address, delivered at a Protestant meeting in Paris by the ex-priest, M. Philippot, gives us a vivid picture of how the Roman doctrine and practice appears, first, to an enlightened priest, and, secondly, to different classes of his lay parishioners :—

At the time when I felt my faith as a Catholic to be crumbling, a stern dilemma pressed itself on me. In order to remain an honest man I must either send in my resignation as a Catholic priest, or I must, while remaining at my post, preach a religion which my conscience approved. Provisionally I resolved to communicate the result of my studies to my *confrères*, and it was then I drew up for the Conference at Verrins the "Dissertation on the Principles of Protestantism," which led later to my excommunication.

But in addition to opening my mind to my fellow-workers I felt it my duty to speak to the people. What most held me back was the fear of causing a scandal and of wounding many honest souls. It was finally the example of Christ which delivered me from these hesitations. If Christ had not scandalised the religious teachers and others of His time, where should we be now?

As soon as I was convinced that I was fulfilling in this a sacred duty, I felt endued with an invincible courage. Said I to myself, "After so many efforts you have found the real truth of religion in the Gospel, and here, with two churches open to you, and two pulpits which you mount every Sunday, shall you keep this truth chained up? When sinners come to you in the confessional, will you not preach to them the necessity of repentance instead of telling them that it is your sign of the Cross and your absolution which effaces the sin? When you have children to catechise, children who will believe everything you say, shall you not speak to them of Jesus Christ and His Gospel? With the sick to console and the dying to prepare for death, will you not announce a free pardon and the assurance of salvation to the repentant and

believing soul? You cannot be such a coward as to refuse, and from this moment, therefore, you must labour as an evangelical pastor in these parishes of yours of Plomion and of Bancigny."

If you ask me by what right I did this contrary to the laws of my Church, I answer it was my right because it was my duty. Here was a work of evangelisation to do; I alone by my official position was able to undertake it; I did then merely my duty. And I did it up to the day when the ecclesiastical authority, backed by the secular arm, expelled me from my post.

After my excommunication I felt certain that my old parishioners and even my best friends would break off all relations with me. The result was the exact contrary, as a visit there which I have just been paying has demonstrated. I passed the Christmas vacation amongst my former people with this as my experience. It was not merely with goodwill and politeness that I was received, but with positive enthusiasm. My return had been eagerly looked for, and despite the large number of visits I paid I left numbers of aggrieved friends on whom I had not had time to call. Here in itself was a significant fact. A priest who had been unfrocked and excommunicated, in

stead of being banished as a renegade or an apostate, is received with entire cordiality by his old flock.

I divide my former parishioners into three classes: convinced and practising Catholics; indifferents, for whom religion is merely a fashion; and free-thinking Catholics, who abstain on principle from all external worship. The first of these classes are amongst my most devoted friends, and it is amongst them that the Gospel may find its surest support. They are practising Catholics, but with Christian convictions. The infallible Pope is with them of little account; they are beginning to blush at their superstitions; confession, pilgrimages, indulgences they are beginning to recognise as quite superfluous. They hold, however, by three things. They keep to the Mass, but they may be weaned from it when shown that the Catholic Mass is only a travesty of the Lord's Supper of the Protestants; they are much attached to the cult of the Virgin and of the saints, but habituate them in their prayers to enter on immediate relation with God, and they will speedily cease to pray to the saints and to the Virgin; they are accustomed to pray for their dead, and I confess I have no intention of contradicting them on this point.

The indifferent Catholics, who have only an outside religion, will remain Catholics until the wind changes. But there is another class of men of extreme interest, the freethinkers. Beforetime I used to visit them simply from politeness, and as I regarded them as people without faith or law, I avoided any conversation that touched on religion. Now that they open themselves quite freely to me I am astonished to discover that there are felt religious needs amongst these freethinkers. Many have said to me, "What we want, sir, is a religion where one speaks to us of God, and where we can pray to God." Another said to me, speaking of the Gospel, "That is the religion for me." A saying of another of these freethinkers was repeated to me, which struck me as remarkable: "In the sermons of the curés there is One who is never spoken of, and that is the Father."

In concluding this address M. Philippot stated his intention to commence work as a Protestant evangelist amongst his former people. He says:

I shall be there in the situation of a Protestant pastor who will have free entry and the most cordial relations with the

best Catholic families, and I shall profit by this to mingle the perfume of the Gospel with that of Rome. I shall not say to my friends, "Do not go to Mass, break with the curé, do not call him in to your sick, make no further use of his services at baptisms and funerals." No; I shall invite them simply to come and hear me in my little chapel; we will sing together; I will expound to them the Scriptures; we will pray together; I will preach the Gospel to them; I will labour to produce in them a personal faith and a personal piety; and when these souls are thus put into God's hands, He will do the rest. When they have been converted to the Gospel, as I have been, they will separate themselves quite naturally from Catholicism, and then it will be for them to decide, in the plenitude of their liberty, whether they will become Protestants or form themselves into a Free Church.

X.

THE CONFESSIONAL.

The following extracts are from a correspondence between an abbé, who has been twelve years in the Romish priesthood and is still in its ranks, and the editor of the *Chrétien Français*, who has a priest's experience of twenty years. It would be impossible to imagine a more damning testimony against the confessional, as used by a celibate clergy, than is contained in these avowals.

Says the curé:

You have been in the ministry for twenty years and I have been a priest for twelve. You doubtless fully know the struggles of the priest against the laws of the flesh and of the human heart. Who of us has not felt the assaults of passion, of that passion unknown or comparatively harmless while we were in the seminary, but which becomes later so imperious and so formidable. Our moral treatises enlarge complacently

on this subject, *in materiâ turpi*. Their precepts are ferociously severe in theory. But how complaisant we are in practice! Woman presents herself under a form maddeningly seductive and dangerous to the priest in the confessional, with her confidences, her *abandons*, her weaknesses, of which she speaks so touchingly, one would say so willingly. Who of us has not succumbed? Rare, indeed, are the exceptions. There are priests whose fall causes a scandal, but how many there are who contrive to save appearances! And what shall be said of those whose position gives them episcopal protection, while the small fry are pitilessly snuffed out! I acknowledge there are temperaments whose virtue is above suspicion, but, alas! how many? I have confessed numbers of priests, and know too much on this point. Why is it that the Roman Church imposes celibacy on its priests when all history affirms that scandals, or at least the most deplorable secret disorders are the consequence?

To this cry from within, the editor from his long experience as a priest replies as follows:—

Your confidence and sincerity have

deeply touched me. But your avowals, be assured, are by no means extraordinary. For years I have been accustomed to similar confidences. Like you I have confessed priests. More, I have lived for over twenty years among them. *Brought up in the seraglio, I know the ins and outs of it.* . . .

At the age of twenty-one, after the special and carefully-ordered life of the seminaries, a young man does not as yet know himself. To profit by his ignorance and the state of mystical exaltation which has been so artistically developed, to snatch from him a vow which is at once irrevocable and against nature, is a crime of *lèse-humanité*.

Woman is forbidden to the priest, and yet he is condemned to live in the midst of women! You say you find woman most seductive in the confessional. Read then Michelet. He will tell you that woman is more dangerous there than anywhere. What the priest takes from woman in the confessional is assuredly the best part of her; her heart too often, and always her conscience. It must be confessed that the imbecile husbands who are content with what is left are sufficiently complaisant! And here we are speaking of virtuous confessors. What of the rest?

St. Dominic acknowledged that he preferred the confession of young women to that of old ones. I have witnessed the fiercest jealousies amongst priests because a fair devotee had quitted one confessor for a preferred rival. The complaint in the sacristies now is that there are none but women scarcely who come to confession. Let men be confessed by women, and there would soon be another state of things!

Meantime let me repeat to you the word of St. Paul: "It is better to marry than to burn." I may add that of Pascal: "Man is neither angel nor beast, but often, in trying to make an angel of him, one succeeds in making him a beast." . . . You well know, M. le Curé, that the Roman Church has treasures of indulgence for those who succumb. There are also absolutions of complaisance, the one object of all being to avoid scandal. . . . One of my *confrères*, formerly a priest, but now a married man and father of a family, was one day attacked by an old colleague on the ground of his marriage. "My dear friend," was the reply, "the lady who is my companion is called my wife. I do not blush to walk out with her upon my arm; my children bear my name." The other understood, and was silent.

The two letters from which these extracts are made discuss many other aspects of the Roman system, but we have confined ourselves here to one point. Its first-hand evidence on a burning question of the Romanist controversy must be accepted as of the first importance.

XI.

A MONK'S EXPERIENCE.

The following from M. Percheron, an ex-monk, gives us a vivid picture of the true inwardness of the Roman cloister and of its results on character. The story appeared in the *Chrétien Français*, in response to a request from the editor:—

I am going to relate the story of my departure from the Church of Rome. I shall do it faithfully, as in the presence of Him who searches all hearts.

After a dissolute youth (the fruits of a childhood passed without religious education) God enabled me, through trials, to find the grace of conversion. In the ardour of a neophyte's piety, I wished to give myself to God without reserve, and to choose a mode of life at once the most austere and perfect. My thoughts drifted to La Trappe, and two years after my conversion I went and knocked at the gate of the cloister with the desire of becoming

a Trappist. I was, however, very soon convinced that my health would not stand their rigorous *régime*. I returned, and acting under the advice of my confessor, I this time entered the Convent of the Fathers of the Holy Sacrament. I was permitted to pronounce the annual vows according to the Romish prescriptions. After that I entered upon a year of theological study with a view to the priesthood. During the course of this year I undertook the care of the sick, and thus divided my time between study and good works. In accordance with the rule I was also obliged to pass long hours of the night and day on my knees in adoration before the Holy Sacrament. The congregation to which I belonged having as their aim the adoration of the Holy Eucharist, had to furnish continually, day and night, worshippers (who relieve one another in turn) before the altar where the Corpus Domini was perpetually and solemnly exposed. This privilege is granted to but few convents. It is accordingly considered a great honour, and a favour of which the fathers of the Holy Sacrament are fond of boasting. But these studies, vigils, and ceaseless excitements of convent life, together with the imprisonment and monotony, ruined my health. I fell seriously ill,

The fathers tended me with great kindness, and my strength returned to me in part; but I remained incapable of following out the regulations. Under their advice, and freely, be it known, I quitted the convent and returned to the world. I say "the world," because I had been taught to call by this name everything which was not of the cloister.

Altogether, during the years of my convent life, I did my utmost to find the Lord and His peace by placing myself blindly and absolutely beneath the yoke of an authority which was to me the incarnation of the Divine will. Mind and body, faith, spirit, and conscience, I placed all at the foot of a man; I had been taught that it was this that constituted perfection. I encountered and endured all the torments and struggles which make up the history of a saint of the cloister. How is one to submit, without tortures of every sort, to the oft-times arbitrary and contradictory wills of men who pretend to have the Spirit from on high, and yet whose human pettiness is all too evident with its caprices and variableness? How is one to endure, without anguish, these thousand and one decrees which spring from sources so numerous and diverse—Rome with its congregations, the

Pope with his encyclicals and decrees, the endless councils with their innumerable canons, the superior, the confessor, the spiritual adviser? One wishes to obey, for salvation and perfection lie, one is told, in obedience, but what is one poor human will to do, while prescriptions from every quarter are raining in upon it, and while every movement and moment are interrupted and worried by contradictory commands? What scrupulous and delicate conscience could stand it?

I am well aware that casuists distinguish between the essential and the optional, the contingent and the necessary; but the monk and the good Catholic have neither the right nor the knowledge necessary to distinguish. Pride, that great devastator of monastic holiness is, alas! so subtle. One is always afraid of falling into pride, for, says one, "If I were to shake one stone of this fragile edifice, the whole will fall to the ground," and they remain in error for fear of falling into pride. And the people have never dreamt of distinguishing the will of their curé from that of God, nor superstitions from Christian spirituality.

I departed then from the cloister, and I have been well convinced since then it was no pride on my part, but the Spirit of God

which already called me, and who, in His infinite mercy, had predestined me to the knowledge of His glorious Gospel.

After leaving, I endeavoured at first to sustain my Christian life with many devout practices. Alas! I placed my hope in vain forms—Jesus Christ alone is a solid hope. Soon, out of all these formulas, I preserved only those necessary to escape damnation; and, not having yet attained the solid rock of faith, I allowed myself to glide, little by little, into worldly ideas. But God in His mercy was watching over my weakness. I was desirous, at this time, of writing the souvenirs of my monastic life for a review. This work recalled to me my former fervent impressions, when I was serving God even amidst the sorrowful practices of a convent. I compared these peaceful and serious joys with the ephemeral and deceptive emotions of the world; and nothing seemed to bear comparison with the early favours I had received from the Lord. Then I began to understand that it was not by blind obedience to men that I should regain peace. I knew the use and value of conscience, which was to me an active guide. The Church of Rome had lost all authority over me. The odious travesty it made of holy ceremonies and heavenly

favours, together with its materialism and worldliness, beneath which Jesus Christ was effaced and His Spirit stifled, finished by revolting me.

It was then that God caused me to become acquainted, by means of a political leaflet, with the name of M. Bourrier. I knew that he had been a priest, that he had undergone the same struggles and mental anguish as myself. I set out to find him.

I was very feeble at that time. God alone knew where He was leading me. To-day I know that I have found the Lord in all simplicity and humility. I know that the Kingdom of God, looked upon as foolishness by the world, establishes itself in humble and childlike hearts. I believe in a Church organisation, but only if founded, as with individual righteousness, on the Spirit of God.

Oh, men of little faith, why have you doubted that Jesus Christ was in the midst of you, in creating for him a Vicar? Vicar of whom? Of Him who is already there? It would be something if only he were worthy of representing Him. But his power and his glory are a perpetual insult to the cradle and cross of Christ. Why have you doubted that the Spirit of God could manifest Himself without the signs that

you have instituted—sacraments, rites, priestcraft? How I could fain say with St. Paul, "Let me be anathema for Christ's sake for my brethren." May the day come at last when government, diplomacy, superstition, and the thirst for the miraculous shall no longer hinder men from hearing the Gospel of the Lord Jesus and of His Cross.

PAUL PERCHERON.

108, Avenue de Courbevoie, Asnières.

XII.

ROME'S FORCING HOUSES.

The following letter of resignation is from M. l'Abbé Perrin, who, at the age of thirty-five, after ten years' service as Vicar of Bourg-de-Péage (Drôme), ha thrown off the Roman yoke. His own words will best explain why. After some introductory remarks, in which he acknowledges the kindness shown him by his superiors, he continues :—

For a long time, in effect, I have no longer held the Catholic faith. I am absolutely convinced that the majority of the dogmas taught by the Church are only the pure inventions of the human mind, superstitions engendered by the ignorance of centuries, and consequently beliefs unworthy of an enlightened and unprejudiced intelligence. Undoubtedly I held that faith when I *entered* the priesthood. But is it to be wondered at that one should hold a faith and conceive no doubts concerning

it until leaving the seminary? Is not the Church careful to prevent its young Levites from reading such books as discuss the Romish doctrines? Does it not also forbid them from associating with those whose views differ from its own? Under the action of the Church's intolerance, in fact, the intelligence of the young aspirant to the priesthood, hampered in its action, stifled as in a hot-house, and that precisely at a moment when it has the greatest need of the immense horizons of thought and human science, becomes simply petrified.

This was the condition to which my own reason had been reduced in that abode of confinement, of ignorance and fanaticism, that is known by the name of Seminary. But once brought back to its normal action, this intelligence quickly perceives that by following the Church it is taking the wrong route, and, without any outside help whatever, without the aid of any of the books forbidden by the Church, without discussion of any sort with the adversaries of the Church, it demolishes its former creed and puts another in its place.

In this state of mind, and under these conditions, my lord, is it not my plain duty to obey the dictates of my conscience, which, disapproving of the doctrines and

practices which my official position forces me to teach, condemns the life of enforced dissimulation that I lead, and cries out to me without ceasing to quit a position so false, and, after all, so dishonourable to an honest and loyal man? To have to teach what one does not believe, to represent in the eyes of the people ideas and a whole series of doctrines which personally one disapproves of—what torture! What anguish to an honest man to have to submit to such a martyrdom! This torture and this anguish were mine; and it is that they may be mine no longer that from this day forth I put off the cassock, re-enter into civil life, and commence a new career in harmony with principles diametrically opposed to those of the Church of Rome.

Truly the voice of my conscience must have spoken loudly for me to have had the courage to take this decisive step. The fear of throwing the souls of my good and beloved parents into despair has long held me back. Neither do I ignore the fact that the public, at least a portion of the public imbued with sacerdotal zeal, is going to pour out on me its imprecations, all the maledictions and anathemas with which its "pious" repertory is so well stocked. However, I am able to assure this portion

of the public that my conscience is perfectly tranquil.

I therefore have the honour to repeat to you, my lord, that I withdraw myself quite freely and quite voluntarily from the clerical yoke, and that I consider myself entirely liberated from all the antiquated obligations that the Church formerly imposed on the inexperience and ignorance of my youth.

MAURICE PERRIN,

Ex-Vicaire of Bourg-de-Péage (Drôme).

M. Perrin retains his belief in Christ, but there are signs in this deeply-interesting letter of the danger to an ardent and sincere mind, in its revolt against the absurdities it has been asked to accept as religion, of a reaction into absolute unbelief. Rome is *par excellence* the maker of infidels.

XIII.

FROM A GERMAN CATHOLIC.

It may be well to insert here the impression which the French movement has made on the mind of a distinguished German Professor. Dr. Hermann Schell, Professor at the Catholic University of Wurzbourg, has just published a sequel to his famous pamphlet, "Catholicism as a Principle of Progress." The new book has for its title, "The New Times and the Ancient Faith."

The following passage is from the preface. Coming as they do from one who is still in the Catholic Church, and occupying a high position there, the words have a special significance:

The animated discussion which has been raised by my pamphlet, "Catholicism as a Principle of Progress," is in itself a proof that the questions raised touch a very real condition of the soul. It demonstrates also

that similar movements have taken birth in other countries, notably in France and in North America. In regard to Italy, she has alliances, too binding both in politics and religion, for me to be able to speak of her here.

It is a remarkable fact that the movement should have sprung entirely from the French clergy, especially as the departure from the Church of many zealous priests has led them to Protestantism. It appears they doubted whether Catholicism was to-day the principle of religious progress.

Assuredly it is not the errors in the Catholic teaching which lead these priests to Protestantism, for they remain attached to their dogmas and Catholic sacraments; but it is only the need of a powerful evolution towards intellectual independence, the need of the right of free examination, of discussion on all the most delicate points; of a stronger inner life; of being able to worship God without any middleman; the need of having more *life* and less sacerdotal hierarchy; more of the Divine and less of the human.

It is chiefly in France that the system of hierarchical absolutism, entirely different from the Canonical law, has shown itself the most clearly. In France, theological

science is overwhelmed by the scholasticism of the Seminary, and the "Sulpiciens" have further removed any remnants of the secular. The worship of God in spirit and truth, that great ideal of all the sacraments, like all private worship, has been replaced by all sorts of fastidious human ceremonies. It is certain that the French spirit, by its nature, will not for long be able to endure this scholastic theology. The Reform movement exists strongly in the great mass of French Catholicism, and this movement would be still stronger if all the enlightened and pious priests who, since October, 1897, have had as their organ the *Chrétien Français*, would recognise that the enthusiasm for the doctrines of Christ and the religion of the Gospel could be crowned with success by their loyal activity in the bosom of the Catholic Church. But their departure from the Church and their connection with Protestantism only compromises the aim which these priests, animated with a religious spirit, have set before them.

The French ex-priests, we venture to say, see far more clearly than Dr. Schell what prospect there is of getting any real reform in the bosom of the Roman Church.

XIV.

"A FRENCH CHRISTIAN."

The following extracts are from a lively address delivered by M. Philippot, of whom we have before spoken, to his old parishioners at Jeantes, who turned out *en masse*, headed by the Maire, to listen to their former curé. The applause with which his points were greeted shows the kind of teaching to which the French peasantry are now open :—

What, then, exactly is a French Christian? He is a man who says, "I have religion; I believe in God, and in the Gospel of Jesus Christ; but I have no need to go to Rome to take my orders from the Pope. Is not the good God to be found in France as well as in Italy? Does not the sun shine above our heads? Is there, by any chance, at the Vatican a telegraphic wire which connects the throne of God with the arm-chair of the Pope?

What! Is it possible that we French-

men, who are the salt of the earth, who march at the head of progress and civilisation, who give the lead to the other nations in questions of art and taste, should be incapable of having a religion of our own, and should be forced to ask of an Italian how we should worship God? That the Italians should entrust the Pope with the government of their consciences is their own affair. As for us, let us be French Christians; let us no longer be a nation of slaves, of tributaries to the Romans!

Further, a French Christian is a man who has no need of a priest in order to live a religious and Christian life. A good priest is one who brings souls to God, and who believes his mission to be ended when he has led a soul into the arms of the Heavenly Father. Instead of this, what is done by three-quarters of the priests? They believe themselves supernatural beings, suspended between heaven and earth, between God and men. If a timid soul, becoming a little confident, essays to take its flight towards God, there is always to be found a priest who appears on the scene, and cries, "Halt! You must go no further; in order to find God you must address yourself to me. You are but an ignorant countryman who does not know

how to address the good God, but *I* know; I have studied expressly with that object. Give me money, I will pray in your place, my prayer will be much more effective than yours." (Applause.)

But the audacity of the priests is greater than that. They dare to turn toward God, and when they see that He is disposed to incline towards a poor trembling soul, to grant it peace and pardon, and to lift it up to Himself, there is always a priest who hastens up and cries, "Halt, Lord, one can go no further! Thou reignest in the heavens; on the earth it is we priests who govern. Thou art but a constitutional Sovereign. Thy decrees must be countersigned by us Thy ministers. If Thou wishest to spread Thy blessings on the people, surrender them first into our hands; that which Thou givest us gratuitously, we will sell again at the biggest price. We will take Thy Holy Spirit, we will imprison Him in mystical formulæ, in sacraments, in consecrated water, in anointing-oil, in pieces of bread, in signs of the Cross in chaplets, medals, scapularies, and girdles, in images and statues, and even in the bones of the dead! And then will we cry out to the people, 'Hasten up, good people, bring your purses;

the great bazaar is open! Everything is sold here! If you pay well, we will sell you the good God into the bargain.'" (Prolonged applause.)

Gentlemen, do you know what a French Christian is? He is a man who says to the priest, "If you wish to instruct me intelligently and faithfully about God, about my soul, and about my religion, I will listen willingly; but if you tell me that I must approach God through you, you deceive yourself and you deceive me. You are but a man like myself. In the sanctuary of my conscience, where I find myself alone with God, I am as much a priest as you are. In my family circle, at the table where I am surrounded by my children, I am more a priest than you are, for I am in a greater degree the representative of God, I am the image of the heavenly Father, since I communicate life to beings sprung from me."

A French Christian, finally, is a man who permits himself to read the Scriptures without hindrance, to read them with his own eyes. The Church of Rome, when putting the Bible into the hands of its priests and the faithful, previously places a bandage before their eyes. Or else, instead of the bandage, it makes them wear

either blue or green spectacles, in such a manner that they see blue when it is white, and green where it is black—(laughter)—and it says to them, "If you have the misfortune to read with your own eyes you will be damned."

Gentlemen, be free Christians. If you possess a Bible, read it with your own eyes, with your own good sense. Permit neither a Catholic curé nor a Protestant pastor to place a bandage over your eyes. If you make use of spectacles, see that they are neither blue nor green, but that they have white glasses—(laughter)—and that they only make the objects grow nearer.

The lecturer invited his hearers to become French Christians, free Christians, freed from Papal despotism, from the yoke of the priests, and from Biblical superstition. The Pope must no longer be king of France. The father of a family must dare to say to the curé, "In my own family circle, at my own table surrounded by my children, I am more a priest than thou." Christians must learn to read the Gospel with their own eyes.

XV.

AN ECHO FROM BELGIUM.

Religious reform is gaining ground in Belgium. A recent resignation, that of M. l'Abbé Rochiz, Vicar of Montigny-sur-Sambre, has made an especial impression. Like many others, it would have passed perhaps unnoticed, and this would have been the wish of the resigning priest, for family reasons which are sufficiently explained in the following letters. But the curé of Montigny-sur-Sambre did not intend it to be so, and he would not let slip such a fine opportunity to have a say in the matter.

On Sunday, the 11th September, the curé read out from the pulpit a letter which he had addressed to the "unhappy author of the scandal." Not content with this manifesto, he had the letter published in *Le Pays Wallon*. We

append this letter, along with the fine reply of the seceder :—

DEAR AND UNHAPPY FRIEND,—Permit your former pastor, while there is yet time, to beg of you to reflect upon the situation, one full of horror and dread, in which you have voluntarily placed yourself.

Have you reflected that this situation will entail a slow and sorrowful agony upon your poor mother, a martyrdom for life upon your two religious sisters (presumably nuns), and the despair of your sister Marie; in a word, will be the shame of your family, so worthy, so honourable, and so pious?

Have you reflected that whatever you may do or say you will never be able to rid yourself of the sacred character of priest which you freely adopted, and which you are going to make a sad sham mockery of so soon as your conduct is made public?

Have you seriously weighed the meaning of those words which will be thrown in your face for all time and eternity—*Unfrocked, apostate, renegade, perjurer!*

Listen, dear and unhappy friend, to the voice of conscience, to the inspirations of the Faith, which, I trust, is not yet stifled

within you: humiliate your pride before God; He is good and merciful. Repeat a good *Ave Maria* to the Holy Virgin, whom perhaps you still love, and to whom, if I mistake not, you consecrated the firstfruits of your preaching on your arrival at Montigny; and make one of those energetic resolutions which uplift and do honour to a man.

Do not delude yourself; the scales will quickly fall from your eyes, and then you will see in all its sad and lamentable reality a situation from which you may still escape to-day. As far as I am concerned I shall do my utmost to bring about an honourable issue to this unfortunate affair.

Yet once again, have pity upon yourself and upon your soul, have pity upon your poor and unhappy family.—Your devoted but desolate

CYRILLE DE BECKER, Curé.

Montigny-sur-Sambre, Sept. 11, 1898.

THE SECEDER'S REPLY.

M. Cyrille de Becker found the following reply in his box:—

MONSIEUR LE CURÉ,—I am unable to thank you for your letter, for I think that,

if you were really and sincerely inspired by the sympathy that you pretend to have for me, you would not have given publicity to a communication in which you drag in my family, my mother, and my sisters, and which, from its essentially private nature, ought not to serve as an element of gossip amongst your *clientèle*. But you force me to reply publicly to a public attack.

For it is in reality an attack that you make rather than an appeal to return to your side, which you, better than any one, know to be impossible. I will show the frankness that you lack.

The swelling words that you make use of do not frighten me in the least. My situation is in no wise "full of horror or dread"; you know it perfectly well. I imagine that it is not without dread that you remark the rapid progress in the number of resignations that are taking place in the Church. Since my departure from Montigny you have had to record the liberation of a Brother of St. Joseph and the deliverance of a nun. Those are the happy ones, the privileged, who can go away. How can it be said of those who remain, who would like to follow them if they had any hope of finding in society the means of gaining their livelihood by working?

Far be it from me to doubt the sincerity of those who wear the cassock or the frock, but I know—I have seen—that with a great number the sad realities of the religious life have dissipated the illusions of their childhood and the confidence of their youth, and that the errors and lies of the Romish religion have only appeared in their ripe age—but, alas! too late. These are the ones to be pitied, for they have recognised the abyss which separates Catholicism from Christianity, and they cannot escape from it.

In their artless credulity my two sisters will doubtless find religious consolation, but do not worry yourself, anyhow, with the impressions of my mother. When I have told her a part of what I know (for I could not tell her all) she will be unable to do otherwise than approve of my having left the Church and having preferred to return into lay society to gather around me there a true family.

You say that I shall never rid myself of the sacred character of the priest. That idea is an invention of clericalism, which only exists for those who like to accept it. If it pleases you to think so, I on my part am free to disbelieve it, and it is what I do.

You say that I shall be liable to have thrown in my face the words *unfrocked, apostate, renegade, perjurer*. There is only one class of people that could make use of such injurious expressions as these, and those are precisely the people whom the Christian religion forbids to do so. One recognises them thus in their manner of practising Christianity.

Unfrocked! Yes! I am proud of it, for it is worth more than being "frocked," like so many others who have nought of the priest but their frock.

Apostate! This is a very big word, that is used very badly. A man does not become an apostate because he abandons the errors of the past to press towards the future and the truth. I was able to go through the Church without staining my conscience, so long as I believed it to be pure and true. But I am following the path for which God destined me in leaving it as soon as I have found it false.

Renegade! A man is not a renegade because he rejects error. Thus did Jesus in receiving the baptism of John the Baptist; thus did the Apostles in abandoning Judaism to found Christianity, since so unfortunately degenerated into clericalism.

Perjurer! No! never! I am faithful to

my oath of being sincere, honest, just, and I should be so no longer if I remained in a Church in which I had no longer any confidence.

The scales have no longer to fall from my eyes. They have fallen! It only remains for me to ask the pardon of those who have listened to me, for having unconsciously preached, propagated, and maintained error in their minds and hearts. I was myself blinded and deceived; this is my excuse, but I should have one no longer had I continued to keep them in ignorance, after that I myself had seen the light.

I pardon those who endeavour to insult me because I have escaped their tyranny happy that I have at last found peace for my conscience in liberty, truth, and justice.

XVI.

FROM CORSICA.

It will be seen that each of these letters has its own special note. That of M. Pô, ex-Curé of San Gavino, Corsica, is that of a peace obtainable in the simple Gospel which is denied to the Romanist. Significant, too, is his emphasis on the fact that his conviction of Rome's emptiness is shared by multitudes who have not the courage to leave her. The letter is addressed to his Bishop:—

My Lord,—For a long time my conscience has pressed me to leave the Church of Rome. A profound study of the Holy Scriptures has brought me to the conviction that Rome, with its dogmas and practices, is far removed from the teachings of Christ.

The Protestant reform, proclaiming as it does that mankind is only uplifted by God and by conscience, seems to me more in

conformity with the Gospel and with my own aspirations.

I have therefore decided, after much reflection and painful struggles, to embrace Reform. To-day, thanks to God, I have found through the Gospel the convictions and that peace of heart which Catholicism was powerless to give me.

In separating myself from the Church of Rome I render homage to the innocent piety which prostrates itself before its altars ; but I highly condemn the Roman system, and I cannot remain among the number of those priests who, believing in it no longer, have yet not the courage to admit it.

In default of any other merit, your lordship will doubtless give me credit for frankness.

Accept, my lord, the assurance of my profound respect.

J. Pô, ex-Curé of San Gavino, Corsica.

XVII.

A ROMISH MISSIONARY.

M. Lecomte, a Romish missionary on the Congo and in the East, gives, in the following account, the story of the Roman drill which made him a priest, and of the process of his disillusionment.

After a vivid description of his early years, he thus summarises its chief points :—

At eight years I was placed as a boarder in a friar's school, where I had no holiday. At twelve I lived under severest discipline at the house of a priest, who did not permit me even to leave the boundaries of the presbytery. At thirteen I was confined in a small seminary, where I remained till I was twenty. At twenty one I was afresh shut up in the Great Seminary, wearing now the *soutane*. Always the prison! O Christ, where are the commandments by which Thou hast ordained

men to treat infancy and youth after such a fashion?

Placed under close surveillance from the earliest years, maintained under the yoke of discipline during the whole of youth, brought up and drilled with steady perseverance in prejudices and errors, moulded with monkish hands, and by a slow, steady process, into religious servitude, crushed under the heel of an absolute authority, ignorant of everything going on in the world outside, shut up inside a mass of superstitions and of absurd fetishes, a man becomes insensibly the member of a caste, whose soul has received the profound imprint of the sacerdotal servitude. Look at them! They are all marked with the indelible priestly stigmata; all sealed with the seal of slavery. This system of education is, in fact, nothing less than an organised child slavery maintained in the interests of a cause, a caste, a hierarchy; what amounts, in fact, to a foreign monarchy, a State within a State, which ought to be resolutely combated and abolished by every Government that is careful of individual and social liberty, and of the true interests of the country and the national honour. But if nations and Governments come, spite of themselves,

under the yoke of Roman clericalism, what is to become of the individual who has been in its meshes from infancy? To get rid of this tutelage a man requires, especially if he be a priest, either an unusual will-power or a special concurrence of circumstances. I am thankful to God for having granted me both these means of deliverance, for I know numbers of my old *confreres* whose studies have shown them what is really the truth, who yet dare not break their chains. Indeed, for this it requires something more than a mere intellectual conversion; there must be also a faith of the heart, the principle of that new life which is the unbought gift of God."

The writer then relates how, pressed by the fear of hell, which his superiors assured him would be his portion if he turned from his "vocation," he became a priest, and finally "was sent, without even being allowed to choose his field of work, with eight colleagues, always in the name of 'holy obedience,' into Equatorial Africa, to the Congo."

They went to Africa in an English vessel, whose sailors "were not particularly religious, but brave and honest

fellows, willing to render us any service possible, though this did not prevent them from making fun amongst themselves of our costume and of our interminable prayers. To be supplicating God out of a great book on the deck of a ship, with many signs of the Cross, and with a multitude of words, was not at all in their line of things."

The first shock to his Romanism came on their arrival at Duke Town, at which there was a flourishing Protestant mission. The missionaries invited the party to enter and have some refreshments.

We should certainly have done honour to these latter, heated and tired as we were by the stiff climb. But, alas! the Superior who accompanied us suddenly realised that they were in the very bosom of heresy, and the missionaries' wives (fearful phenomena), whom he had seen under the verandah, terrified him to such a degree that he made a retreat by the quickest route possible. But on the way back my attention was drawn by some freshly-made graves, dominated by stone crosses. Stopping to read what was written on one of these, I saw the name of a young English lady, the

wife of a missionary, who had died at twenty-five, and, to my astonishment, I found underneath the words from the Latin Vulgate :—

Beati Mortui qui in Domino Moriuntur.
Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.

"What," said I to myself, "the Protestants then read the sacred Scriptures, and in Latin! Do these hardened heretics, then, believe in the enjoyment after death of eternal felicity? Had these men who had written such words on the stone a living faith in the Lord? The tears came into my eyes. Here was something incomprehensible, which I could not fathom. Later the memory of that sacred tomb in the African cemetery was to come back to my memory, and to help resolve my doubts.

He returned from the Congo nearly dead with fever after two years of labour and privations, and after his recovery was employed as a professor in the colleges of the French Catholic Society of Missions. In 1893 he went on a mission to the East.

In Jerusalem, he says,

I had the advantage of coming frequently

into contact with Protestants in the ordinary affairs of life, and they gave proof of so much honesty and uprightness—things sufficiently rare in the East—that I was particularly struck. Certainly these heretics, destined to perdition, had good hearts and Christian principles, even consciences more delicate than one always found among Catholics. There must be a cause for all this, and the more I reflected the more I felt drawn towards them.

On his return to France, the death of a beloved sister, whose fears he vainly strove to allay by his priestly absolution, deepened these impressions. Finally he came into contact with M. Réveillaud, who, amongst other things, offered for his study this formal proposition: The doctrine of the Pope and the doctrine of Jesus Christ are not at all, as Catholics think, one and the same doctrine, but are perfectly distinct and frequently in absolute contradiction.

The words of M. Réveillaud confounded me, and to properly judge them I set myself to study the Roman doctrines by the light of the Scriptures. On this road I

moved from one surprise to another. I had been told that the Protestants falsified the Bible. What I found was that it was Rome which had falsified God's Word with an unparalleled audacity. I came finally to the conclusion that the Roman doctrine is justly called Romanism, and is a religious system judged and condemned by the Bible, by history, and too often by common-sense. I found out during this study the extent of the lying and hypocrisy by which the confidence of the Catholic peoples had been abused. Naturally a man of peace, I felt my whole soul stirred to indignation and revolt. Of all questions the one which occasioned me most anguish was that of transubstantiation. I wanted to hold on to this last hope. I burrowed amongst theologians and Church fathers; I wept, I prayed. In vain. All went. It is impossible, in short, to read the Bible and to remain Romanist. How I suffered during this crisis! My nights were full of nightmares. My days were passed in solitude crying, "Where is the truth?" . . . The life I was obliged to live appeared from that time simply impossible. I found it impossible to profess convictions which no longer existed, and I resolved to finish with this hypocrisy.

He wrote accordingly to the Superior of his order, who had just appointed him to an honourable and most agreeable post, a letter of resignation, in the course of which he said :—

I have arrived at an age in which my experience, my reflections, my studies, my travels have brought me to the conviction that the teachings of the Roman Church are in more than one point opposed to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

M. Lecomte gives a touching account of the way in which, by further Protestant teaching and especially by the study of St. John's Gospel, he came into a joyous personal realisation of Christ :—

I felt afresh that strange, indefinable, divine something which I had already experienced at the age of ten. In my joy I cried instinctively, It is He whom I knew at ten! And all that without auricular confession or absolution. In that minute of revelation the Roman system appeared in all its horror, falsity, and abomination.

. . . O Church of Rome, thou hast by thy wilful errors and thy sacrilegious superstitions reduced thyself to the level of Judaism and of the grossest fetishism. Thou art a perpetual scandal on the face of the earth!

M. Lecomte, who gives this striking narrative, is now proposing to undertake, in one of the French Mediterranean colonies, a work of faith for orphans on similar lines to that accomplished by George Müller in England.

XVIII.

ROME'S PRETENCES.

The following is part of a letter to his parishioners from the Abbé Claveau, late Curé of Pocé in the diocese of Tours. The Abbé, it will be seen, like so many of his brother clergy, has found the Roman pretences too much for an honest and enlightened conscience.

From the Curé of Pocé to his parishioners :—

My Dear Parishioners,—Having taken my departure from the Church of Rome after years of struggle with a conscience which groaned at being condemned to a frightful hypocrisy, I can to-day address myself to you all, and sum up in a few words what I have already said to my archbishop and to a few of my parishioners.

I wrote to his lordship as follows :—

You would not wish that even a simple believer, and still less a priest, should act

against his conscience in continuing hypocritically to teach and to practise that which he no longer believes to be the truth. But this would be involved in my continuing to preach absolute submission to the Church of Rome, which history now reveals to me as a body of men attributing to themselves the sovereign power of governing souls in the name of God and of Jesus, but in reality having recourse to all the subterfuges of politics, accepting all sorts of compromises with the powerful of the day in order to preserve a shadow of temporal domination over men and governments.

Can this Church still rightly call itself the universal and spiritual Church of Christ, the Kingdom of Heaven announced in the Gospel, and of which the Saviour said in His Passion, "My Kingdom is not of this world"? Would it not be hypocrisy to continue to mount the altar, and to perform rites in which I recognise no other value, after the testimony of Christ Himself and of His apostles, than that of a commemoration of this last Communion with His disciples?

Would it not be hypocrisy to imagine myself invested with a power which God alone possesses—that of pardoning sins,

after having extracted beforehand, in a vexatious inquisition, a detailed knowledge of these same sins? Was auricular confession obligatory amongst the early Christians? I see in it the surest school for lying in children, and for youth and ripe age that of the most dangerous immorality, a peril even for the sincere and honest priest.

I wonder why ecclesiastical celibacy (whose relative utility I do not contest, and which I venerate in those who observe it in all its purity) is imposed, under heavy penalties, in the Latin portion of the Roman Catholic Church, whilst marriage is permitted, even enforced, on the Eastern priest? Why should a priest have imposed upon him such irrevocable undertakings, when Christ, and Paul His faithful interpreter, considered them for all, without exception, as essentially temporary? Then, too, the subtle machinery for leading the child and the young man to the generous though unconscious immolation of himself and of his most sacred liberties to the Church of Rome, for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls! And his conscience—what is made of that? A bond-slave until it has become nauseated, or better, till, freed at last, it can say with the

Apostle, "*I have been apprehended by Christ Jesus.*"

As at once an honest man and a Christian, both my reason and my conscience emphatically refuse to play the *rôle* of hypocrite; and that is what I should be if I maintained any longer the management of a parish, or any ecclesiastical appointment whatever in the Church of Rome.

You have the reputation, my lord, of being broad-minded and liberal, and of possessing a heart of gold. You will suffer, I doubt not, from this determination of mine, but I am convinced that at the bottom of your heart you will approve of it and will not judge of it otherwise than as it is in reality—the cry of a sincere conscience Christian before all else, firmly and for ever attached by faith and love to the only Christ, our Saviour and our Judge.

And to you, my dear Parishioners, in taking a determination which will surprise you painfully, perhaps, I owe a frank and clear explanation of my conduct.

I have not acted lightly. I have reflected, studied, prayed. I obeyed God and my conscience. In the midst of you I have always been respectful of your Catholic beliefs. If, at the risk of creating for myself enemies, I have maintained the

strict application of the rules of the Church. all those who have had to do with me will render me, I hope, this justice, that I have never refused to render a service, and that, in order to do this, I have spared neither my time, my trouble, nor even my money. Several have given me on various occasions testimonies of their gratitude; I thank them with all my heart. May God, who knows my faith and love, give me His help, and be ever with those who have been my friends.

If they understand that the voice of conscience should be listened to before all, because it is the very voice of God, they will approve of my action or at least will not throw insults in my face.

To those who have hitherto opposed me as the representative of Clericalism, and its spirit of invasion and domination, I can to-day loyally hold out the hand, for it is precisely this same Clericalism, the constant menace to our country, that I find myself now fighting against. Though I can no longer accept Roman Catholicism I still hold to Christianity, and attach myself to it more strongly than ever. That is why I come to Protestantism to study its beliefs and to appreciate its works, which I had always considered more in conformity with

the Gospel of Christ and with the spirit of the early centuries of the Church.

Those who place above all things the dictates of conscience will be surprised that I did not take my departure earlier from the Church of Rome, but let them appreciate clearly the difficulties, the obstacles, all that which holds back and enchains the priest in his horrible situation; let them put themselves in his place, and realise what an amount of courage is required to break his bonds, and then their astonishment will cease. As for myself I can only repeat the words of St. Paul: "It was necessary that I should be apprehended of Christ." I bless Him for it every day, and freely give up my life to Him.

XIX.

AN ITALIAN SAVANT.

The Abbé Jean de Casamichela is a Doctor of Philosophy, and has been a Catholic Professor of Rhetoric. Disillusioned as to Rome, he has turned to Protestantism, and has recently been staying at M. Bourrier's Home for ex-priests at Sèvres. While there he delivered, at a conference of Protestant pastors, an impressive personal testimony in Italian, of which the following is a translation. It shows that an Italian Protestantism is preparing itself in the very bosom of the Roman clergy.

Gentlemen,—If I have left the pale of the Church of Rome to embrace Protestantism I have not forgotten the reminiscences of my youth. Memory still reproduces the altar, garnished with

flowers, before which I bent my young brow, the noble music of the organ, following the grave and sonorous chants, and the light filtering through the window-panes and playing upon the tiles in the midst of the prostrate figures of the faithful. I have not forgotten the austere Cross, stretching its arms over the tomb of those we have loved most in this world. If there exists for me an image to be venerated above all others—a sacred image—it is that of the Crucified One of Calvary, the Martyr nailed to the infamous Cross, wounded and crowned with thorns, and who in His last agony forgave His tormentors.

And to-day it is with no common emotion that I listen to the distant call of the bells, when their sonorous voice awakens the echoes of the valleys. In hours of sadness I always love to go and meditate in the lonely and silent church, amid the penetrating influence which the prayers, the sighs, and the tears of so many generations have accumulated there.

But one question arises; a question which many of my *confreres* have already resolved by study and reflection. All this equipment which strikes the senses and touches the heart, all these manifestations

of art, the pomp of the Roman ritual and the brilliancy of its ceremonies, are they more than a brilliant veil, which but hides the poverty of its ideas and the inadequacy of its instruction? Is it not the feeling of its inability to satisfy the higher faculties of the soul, of the intelligence, the judgment, and the reason which has forced the Church into the path of outward and material manifestations?

Protestantism, on the other hand, is more sober. If it disdains all ceremony and ornament, it is in order to more readily bring out the purity of evangelical instruction and the affluence of its ideas. It establishes the one authority of the conscience, and advocates worship in spirit and in truth. We know all the beauty that is bound up in the doctrine of Christ; we know that it is par excellence the doctrine of love, religion and pity, of mercy and brotherly kindness towards men.

But is the doctrine taught by the Church of Rome the doctrine of Jesus? Have the words of the Nazarene come down to us pure and free from all admixture? And is the interpretation that the Church offers us exempt from all superfluous or foreign element? There is no question more grave, more worthy of the deliberation of

thinkers, as of all those who love and seek after truth.

A profound study of the Gospel has brought me to the conviction that Rome, in its dogmas, as in its liturgical practices, has wandered from the teachings of Christ. After much hesitation I have decided to embrace Protestantism, where one can find that peace of heart, coupled with the liberty of God's children, which Catholicism is powerless to give. Over and above all vain polemics and barren disputes, there is one thing that escapes all criticism—that is that aspiration of the human soul towards an eternal ideal, which supports it in its struggles, consoles it in its trials, and inspires it in its moments of great resolutions.

But where is man to find the sure way which leads to God? From whence is he to draw that supreme conviction which is to guide him from one halting place to another towards that final aim of existence? What will be the faith of the future?

The material and transitory vestures of religion pass away, but the religious idea, the pure belief, disentangled from mere externalities, is indestructible. Religious forms will pass away, like all the manifestations of thought. They will not be

able to escape from the law of progress, which governs all things. The faith of the future, which I can already discern rising up from the midst of the shadow, will be the faith of the Reformation, the faith of the Gospel. It will be the universal belief of all souls, one which will reign over Society, and in the heart, which will make all strife to cease, which will put on one side the religion of the Pope, on the other the Evangelical faith. By its means all science will become religious, and all religion will become scientific; it will dissipate all doubts, and will open out a new era.

XX.

FROM A CAPUCHIN MONK.

Below are some extracts from a letter that M. Eugéne Smetz, a Capuchin friar, who has been a missionary in Armenia, has just written to the Head of his Order. M. Smetz has since been admitted to the faculty of the Eglise Libre at Neuchâtel.

Reverend Father,—I have the honour to inform you that from this moment I cease to belong to the Order of Capuchin Monks, and to the Church of Rome.

I am abandoning the Roman Catholic faith. Sent five years ago to the East, as an Apostolic missionary, I found myself, for the first time in my life, face to face with Protestantism. Finding it necessary to study its teachings in order to fight against it, I arrived, after an impartial examination, to this conclusion—that one can only become a perfect Christian by ceasing to be a Catholic, that it is impossible to be

a member of the Church of Christ without turning one's back on the Church of Rome and its superstitions. The question is really to know where to find the doctrine of the Saviour and of the Apostles, and where it is taught in all its purity and integrity.

For myself, on the question between Christ and the Pope, between the Gospel and its counterfeit, between the teaching of the Apostles and the dogmas of human invention, between the liberty of God's children and the abuses of a hierarchy which tyrannises over consciences, I have no longer any option—my choice is made, and irrevocably. In embracing Protestantism I have found Christ not as He appeared to me formerly, in an indistinct and nebulous distance, diminished and disfigured under the barely-transparent veil of Roman duperies, but the veritable Christ of the Gospel, the only Redeemer, the only mediator between God and men. I have learnt to draw near to Him without any intermediary of any sort, like the crowds that used to press on His footsteps in the time of His mortal life. He suffices for all my needs, because He is the way, the truth, and the life.

You will, perhaps, find it necessary to "deplore the author of this scandal," and to

"pray for his repentance." I may tell you, however, that I am in no way to be deplored"; and that as for "repentance" I shall always repent of not having left earlier a Church in which I have suffered so much.

Accept, reverend father, the assurance of my respect. EUG. SMETZ.

XXI.

ROME'S CHILD-RECRUITS.

M. Joanny Patel till recently a Professor at the Institute of Lay Monks of Nôtre-Dame-des Lumières, has just left the Roman Communion, after forwarding a very frank letter of resignation to Father Augier, the General Superior of the Order. The following pages consist of extracts from some souvenirs he has just published of his childhood and youth. He was, as will be seen, almost from the beginning, one of "Rome's recruits." The vivid and minutely detailed picture he has here drawn gives us a perfect view of the pitiless and, one may say, inhuman methods by which this monster of ecclesiastical despotism grinds its instruments into fitness for its ends.

M. Patel's Story.

My earliest infancy was passed in not

only a Catholic, but a wholly sacerdotal atmosphere; and were I to recall the first dreams of my cradle, I should doubtless see long processions of angels clothed in red cassocks and long surplices turning over the leaves of their missals, and smiling through the smoke of their censers.

"You will be a priest," I heard from all sides; and I said to myself in reply, "Yes, I will be a priest."

Those who hear such words from the lips of a child are not likely to ignore these signs of a precocious inclination. In family gatherings and at friends' houses, the little future preacher, who already knows how to move his audience, is hoisted on to the table. Everywhere he is made to repeat the words already learnt, "I will be a priest." Alas! he was made to repeat them at the very side of a death-bed. . . . Oh, my father, whose kisses I have missed since the age of five years, the last sod had barely covered thy newly-made grave ere already my future had been mapped out, and my calling irrevocably decided upon! Could I be aught else but a priest when it was in a priest's house that thine eyes were closed for their long last sleep! in a priest's house where my childish spirit had grown accus-

tomed to the daily celebration of the Mass, and to the constant repetition of Latin prayers!

Brought back to my mother's native village, I appeared before everybody as a little curé of eight. If the taunts of the school children embittered my childhood, the compliments of the pious fed my vanity with hypocritical joys. My mother consoled herself for the heroic struggles of her widowhood by caressing in her heart and mine this precious secret. In order to keep me up to my resolutions she caused me to lead a life at once austere and retired, away from the little peasant children whose patois and whose games she forbade to me. And I suspect that priestly influence counted for not a little in this narrow programme, enforced by maternal prudence. At last, at the age of twelve, after the joys of my first Communion, on a never-to-be-forgotten day when I was made to occupy myself entirely in beseeching Jesus to give me the "call," I was presented to two missionary monks. At the Confessional itself, after an enumeration of my childish sins, I said to the one I had chosen for this great confidence, "And then, my father, my mother told me to tell you that I wished to become a missionary." At a stroke, on to

my priestly calling had been grafted the vocation of a monk.

Here my recollections become clearer. I see the room in which, with a friend, I indited my petition for admission in a letter, in which my timid eloquence recalled the marvellous dreams of the apostolic conquests. I recall the freezing morning when, after several hasty kisses, and while drying away the great tears from eyelids heavy with sleep, the two lads, with hurried steps, followed the guardian to the train—the beginning of their long, long wanderings.

On the door of the institution which opened its portals to them was inscribed the word "Juniorat," a name whose etymology seems to promise to young folks at least something of family life and maternal attention. Does the reality come up to the promise? And are these "homes," as they should be, homes of enlightened instruction and high education, where youth learns to direct its moral life to noble and serious issues? To ask this question, and to wish to answer it according to one's conscience, is not, I think, showing ingratitude.

The simple truth is that, taking advantage of the word "vocation," the monks of different congregations carry on a veritable

white slave-trade. Aided in their work by the curés, who seek to capture as many choir-boys as possible, they bring in from the surrounding neighbourhood every October some fifteen to twenty children. Their age and the school they have frequented is all that is asked of them. To be young and not to have come from a lay school is to offer material easily malleable for the work which is going to be undertaken on their hearts and minds. Then for six years the training of the future monks is carried on. Declaring themselves the only judges of their programmes and their rules these gentry proceed, by means of improvised professors, to give a routine and utterly ignorant "instruction." Science, repudiated by them as "bankrupt," has no place in these institutions; University training is proscribed that there may be no enticement to any other career.

At five o'clock in the morning the bell fetches these poor little children out of bed to kneel in wearily long prayers. From then, right on to the evening, a rigorous silence is enforced, scarce enlivened by the "recreations" where the games are obligatory and conversation forbidden. The suppression of all holidays dries up the heart, deprived thus of family

joys. Careful surveillance of the correspondence brings about the exchange of untruthful letters, which convey to the too indifferent parents no proper idea of the details of this sad existence. The spying, too, of false comrades, the long questionings—probing into the most intimate secrets—create unconsciously a habit of constraint.

After several months of this monotonous life a child of any polish is brought to the level of the heavy peasants by whom he is surrounded; sprightly ones have become awkward and sad, the intelligent are no longer frank. They have all become subdued, without initiative, with a piety too often only surface deep, remaining for position's sake, and because they know their far-away parents dread to see them return.

For the rest, these establishments are on the decline; the different congregations maintain a frantic competition with one another, and parents now abandon their children only to those who ask the least, or to those who will pay the journey and furnish the outfit. And they call these "vocations"!

After the years of the "Juniorat" came the year of Novitiate. The Novitiate is the

real entrance-gate to Holy Orders. It is then that the youth studies for his special religious vocation. It is then that he is taught to distinguish among his vague desires the human from the divine. One by one he has explained to him those "Rules," fallen from heaven, and whose every article merits the worship due to Biblical texts, or to the crumbs of the consecrated wafer.

Through the Novitiate training the Superiors penetrate the depths of these young consciences, and take lasting possession of them. Sermons, private advice, accounts of missions, enthusiastic annals about the origin of the Order. . . . All is brought into play in order to excite the imagination and to solicit the attention of these hearts eager for a special devotion.

The appeals of the Superiors, who wish to obtain subjects at any cost, the inaptitude for any other career, the distaste for an unknown world, for which the novice has been inspired only with hatred, a something of mystical in the soul in which is formulating the ideal of apostleship, these are the elements which work for a continuance in the Novitiate. The year passes without leaving any marked change in the characters. It has been lost in details. After the Novitiate, when it was no longer

feared that I should look behind me. I obtained a few days' holiday. At last my youth, saddened by six years of separation, was going to taste again of family joys. But much grown and draped in the dreary folds of my cassock, I found my filial affection to a certain extent constrained. They were decisive days, however. Intoxicated by the joy and pride of all around me, I resolved to pursue the route I had entered upon, and to carry through to the end a vocation which evidently brought happiness to those I loved.

The following years brought me to the *Scolasticat* for philosophical and theological study. Far from the wide paths which modern science has opened out, outside the vital questions which stir our contemporaries, the Church still drags slowly along in the subtle obscurity of its scholasticism. Its mediæval methods are excellently adapted to the exposition of its impossible doctrines and to the initiation of the student into the double-dealings of its casuistry.

The first academical year but continues the apprenticeship of the Novitiate. The young monk tests his powers by the vows of one year. The year having rolled by he is called to the "perpetual profession" in

the institution, by taking vows of poverty, of chastity, of obedience, and perseverance.

The Order which secured me as a member has baptized this act with the name of "Oblation." Always this corruption of words! This immoral act, which tears from a man his very manliness and makes of him a machine, is presented to the young Christian, filled with zeal, under the fascinating title of a sacrifice and an offering! He is to become a lay monk, a something consecrate, transfigured, lifted above all earthly things!

Youth is always on fire to sacrifice itself to something great; the young monk is about to sacrifice himself to his God! His perverted conscience tells him that God calls him, and that to refuse is to endanger his eternal salvation. No! He will not refuse! He advances, deeply moved, yet valiant, towards the altar where, on the sword-point of his word, he is going to sacrifice himself. Listen! the words fall, deep as the notes of a knell, "Poverty! chastity! obedience!" It is his body, his heart, his will that he offers to Jesus, whose image beams on the altar, where tapers light up with points of gold the clouds of incense and the sheaves of flowers. . . .

All that can be said has been said on the "vows of religion." Assuredly this part of sacrifice may lead sincere and artless men to a life of commendable virtue, and each is free to serve God in this way if his conscience bids him. What is *false* is that this should be represented as the sole perfection of the Gospel, and what is *criminal* is to impose vows of perpetuity on young people of eighteen to twenty years of age, and often younger than that.

The pretext offered is that the sacrifice of a young heart is more pleasing to the God "who loves the first-fruits." The real reason is that the different Orders, fearing secessions, wish to bind their subjects to them before they have accomplished the round of their theological studies—a mere question of self-interest.

Such calculations are criminal, for the young man cannot be engaging himself with a full knowledge of what he is doing when he vows himself for life. For life! Does he know what "life" means? Does he know the conditions of it, the necessities of it, the temptations of it? What will he do when he discovers what is hidden by the gold of his fetters?

Do not accuse of thoughtlessness any one who has thus pledged himself. His

artlessness has taken the word "vocation" seriously; his teachers, taking advantage of his aspirations after a generous ideal, have made of him the Don Quixote of a chimerical world; his vanity, it must also be said, has been corrupted by the *love of fine feathers*—I mean to say by the desire to strut about with his cassock (the first of costumes for the crowd) and with the brilliant cross on his breast.

I was twenty years old when the "oblation" bound me almost as securely as did the priesthood later on. On that day they were singing round about me, "Heaven with delight contemplates its victim." Oh, yes! its victim—victim of a whole system expressed in this one word "vocation."

XXII.

IN THE CELL.

M. Patel's Story Continued.

One might think that on the day when the young monk records his solemn vows he becomes, at least, a full-fledged member of the Order to which he has given his life. The moment of recording his irrevocable sacrifice of himself will, at least, witness the entrance on his majority when, free from the fetters of youth, he will be able gladly, and with all the resource of his young initiative, to devote himself to the avocations of his new sphere. As against his liberty, which he gives up to them, his Superiors will grant him their confidence and friendship, and thus compensate him for the home love from which he has been torn, for that other love whose legitimate dreams are for ever denied him.

Alas! a heart that has sickened in the stifling atmosphere of a cell does not require four years to recognise the bitter irony of these questions, and the futility of these

hopes. This contract into which the young conscience has brought all the highest in its nature is but a onesided bargain, which the neophyte's exploiters now prepare to make the most of.

The trials of the "Vocation" were but a prelude; behold us to-day in the horrors of a prison! The word will not seem too strong to any one who studies that sombre institution in the Rue St. Petersbourg. The massive doors, the dirty grey of the walls, the narrow windows which permit the entry of but a sparse amount of daylight, all indicate either a prison or a monastery. Monastery or prison (the same word "cell" is to be found in the vocabulary of the two institutions), it is the General Institution of the RR. PP. Lay Monks of Mary the Immaculate. Beneath the General Superior reigns the staff of the Order, which, like other staffs at this *fin de siècle*, allows no revision of its acts, and whose justice is not like other justice. It is from here that one man, in defiance of the laws of his country, disposes of the liberty and life of a thousand of his fellows, knowing, if needs be, how to consign the sacrificed ones to some "Devil's Island."

"Obedience" dogs the neophytes from the start. Each has a field of labour

assigned him under the by no means paternal direction of Provincials and local Superiors. Thenceforth the monk will have, between his General and himself, these intermediaries—proud and unbending like all intermediaries. The *role* assigned is awaited with anxious expectancy, for it decides one's whole life. Some it renders happy and useful, being in accord with their natural aptitudes and tastes. Where, as too often happens, one's lot is fixed by inexperienced or wicked men, the decision works ruin. But, lucky or unlucky, the monk, rendered an invincible soldier by the brazen armour of his vows, is obliged to obey, and depart for some province of France, or for a foreign land; and more than one, on that day, hides the bitterness of his soul beneath a cloak of false enthusiasm.

Like all my fellow-students, I had a drawing towards foreign missions, the heroism of which charm the youth who only sees them as in a mirage. To carry to his brothers "seated in darkness and death" a little of the faith with which his heart is overflowing, and to civilise peoples with the Cross which has civilised worlds, what a dream, this, for a young apostle! The anticipated apostolic journey, the excite-

ment of the all-too-short days of travel, and the poetic night under a starry sky, are at least a relief from the *ennui* of the cell.

My lot, however, as announced by the General, was not to include the experiences of a long voyage or the inclement climate of distant lands; it looked, in fact, agreeable, since it assigned to me the easy occupation of professor at Notre Dame des Lumières, under that smiling blue sky of Provence which I already knew.

I had not, however, lived the monkish life there for three months before a terrible disenchantment had taken possession of my poor heart; and it is after four years of painful experience that I now speak of the vows, the regulations, and of the Superiors.

Upon the four vows—those of Poverty, Chastity, Obedience, and Perseverance—I have my own opinion, disputable perhaps, but sincere. Tell a monk that you do not understand the value and morality of his pledges, and he will reply that you do not know how to read the Gospel, of which he will scornfully cite the *qui potest capere capiat!* He will pity you for not having seized the theory of sacrifice; the offering of holy monks and saintly nuns, joined with the blood of Christ which flows at the

Mass, is, he tells you, enough almost to bring down the heavens! Words and lies! The flame of this quadruple holocaust does not rise towards heaven; and the four vows, each tearing their portion from the victim, make him simply helpless in the hands of a few ambitious men. The invention is admirable; but with what pity must one regard the artless souls whose upright faith and piety have been surprised by the fallacious interpretation of patristic and Scriptural texts!

Oh, you innocents, it is not in order that you may more nearly resemble Him who "had not where to lay His head" that you are made to say, "I make a vow of poverty." It is not because St. John Chrysostom has said that being "athletes despoiled, you will more surely become the conquerors in your conflict with the devil." In taking away from you all your possessions, and the free use of a single coin, making themselves the purveyors of your absolute necessities, your Superiors acquire the entire rights over the energies of your body, and fatten the purse from which they draw. While they are enriched you have become mere automatic machines.

What simplicity you are showing, too,

when to please Him whose miraculous birth of a virgin excites your adoration, and in order to imitate on earth the purity of the heavenly hosts, you say, "I make a vow of chastity!" Behind you I see the ironical smile of your Superiors. Your mystical zeal and your dreams of a spiritual marriage render you the enervated and submissive slaves of these "killers of energy."

And now, after having so prostituted the half of yourself as to make these first two vows, you have but to say, "I make a vow of obedience."

It is precisely to this point that they wished to lead you, since without this supreme vow the Church would be deprived of that finest flower of all its garden, the monk! Read again, for your consolation and support, the marvellous argument of Saint Thomas, and the persuasive commentaries of the Jesuit Rodriguez! Only, after this abdication of your will, do not tell us that you are men, still less that you possess the perfection of Christianity; you who incarnate the will of God in the sound of a bell, in a word, a gesture, a desire of your Superiors!

Finally, your vow of perseverance may be agreeable to Him "whose gifts are without repentance." But, be assured that this

fourth vow completes, above all else, the work of your masters, who would not like to be deprived of such perfect slaves, and who prefer that you carry with you to the grave the secrets of their tyrannies! Well may they speak of this admirable vow of stability!

A very legitimate curiosity will no doubt demand of me what is the practical outcome of these religious vows.

Some sincere monks practise poverty even to the extent of uncleanliness; and the ancient houses are edifying on this head; so much so as to merit the eulogium which I heard once delivered by a Superior: "My fathers, you live here in a most royal filthiness!" But with the century which is waning the monks are becoming less in love with dirt; the new convents that are being built are stately and ornamental; and the same Superior, inaugurating the house at Lyons, said with a smile, "Here, poverty does not reside on the walls, it has entirely taken refuge in your hearts!" The Superiors, however, and the knowing ones under the eye of the Superiors, are clever in allying their vow of poverty with their natural love of ease, and Sybarites are not exclusively confined to the outside world.

Chastity is a more delicate subject. Most

people have little faith in the virtue of these men, whose cassock and flagellations do not always extinguish the passions, and I have seen, in a monastery, the only Father whose austerity the public did not dare to suspect accused by a *confrère!* All slander you say! Well, for my part, I was very little edified by the long interviews of some of the monks with the ladies whom they entertained in the parlour, or with whom they walked about in the garden, nor by the conversations that certain confessors held with their female clients.

In point of obedience, the Superiors complain that Socialism gains the younger element in the communities, where the spirit of criticism, for want of liberty in the Press, invents liberty of speech. Finally, it is not a rare thing for an enlightened monk to treat his vow of perseverance—as I have just treated mine.

In order to imitate that perfect city spoken of by the prophet, the soul of the monk, already protected against the enemy's assaults by the threefold and fourfold bond of his vows, must have, in addition, an outer wall, and this final rampart is provided for him in the Rules and Constitutions. Laws are, of course, necessary to a congregation, as to every society that

wishes to exist, but the monkish rules represent too often simply the mediocre intelligence of the legislator. When a founder has been but an ordinary man, tormented by the mania for greatness and the lust of domination, his book of rules, which the young monk receives with the solemn words, "*Hoc fac, et vives!*" ("Do this and thou shalt live"), will be largely a revelation of his own pettinesses. I tried to do *this*, and I was myself nearly undone by it! How much simpler is the Gospel than all these docketed details on our "intercourse with God, with the Superiors, with the brethren, and with the world"? These minutiæ disgust one even with things most excellent in themselves. Prayer, for example, that refreshing dew falling from heaven upon souls united in the name of Christ and of the Father, is in the monastery a wearying exercise in a stifling and unhealthy hall, under the eye of a spying Superior. The silence of convents, instead of being a salutary and fortifying seclusion, only deadens and brutalises.

In one article of the rules it is admitted that the other articles are not binding under pain of sin; but woe to him who would thus reassure his scrupulous soul. Every evening he has to confess to his

Superior the omissions of the day, and twice a month he must wash his dirty linen in public. He undergoes, that is, a public confession at an exercise called "trespasses" (*coulpe*). Each monk in his turn details his peccadilloes, listened to by the stern Superior and the whole assemblage in funereal silence, as juries might listen to the admission of a parricide. The confessions over, each one in turn makes his remarks upon the others. And all this must be done seriously! One day in a *coulpe*, presided over by the General Superior himself, I charged myself with a simple failure of silence. A fortnight after the Very Reverend Father wrote to me from Paris: "A more humble estimate of yourself would have produced a confession more explicit and edifying." Evidently I was little intended for a life of perfection. I lacked, it seems, the art of accusing both myself and others; I did not know how to act the Tartuffe, to talk of my "vermin" and other topics equally edifying in this absurd function, to which each brings his hypocrisy and his rancours.

The rules are such as the Superiors make them. In a few veritable oases intelligent and paternal men make their subjects happy by a wise and liberal application of the

laws. But they are rare. The race is increasing of those parvenus who, hiding their real quality under a cloak of austerity, make of the constitutions a springboard for their ambitious projects and a pedestal for their pride! A little before my secession I received an infallible recipe for becoming a Superior. It was either to creep up the sleeve of the bigwigs or, on the other hand, to fearlessly attack the too patent evils of the administration. Intrigue or uproar! That is the way to power. The government of the convents exhibits the elements of the lowest order of politics.

We are told, however, that we are to see God's representatives in these rulers! Ascetic books affirm even that it is a heavenly favour, a gauge of the highest merit, to have to obey in silence mountebanks of this order. In the course of a canonical visit my Superior General asked me one day if my relations with the Superior of my convent were those of a monk filially devoted. "But he is a fool!" I cried, and I explained the reasons for this characterisation. "Oh, my child, would that make any difference if you had the spirit of faith? Would not a Superior, be he lame, one-eyed, or one-armed, always be the representative of God?" "But, my Very

Reverend Father, are you going to choose as directors of your homes the blind, the halt, and, above all, the fools?"

Altogether, may we not say that it is not God's work which is being accomplished in the monasteries, but rather men's work—and ofttimes what men! Have I done ill in embracing the light with which the monotony of my life has been illuminated, and in regaining my liberty?

XXIII.

FRANCE AND THE EX-PRIESTS.

The two following extracts, the first from "An Appeal for the Evangelisation of France," issued by a number of ex-priests, and the second from an address by M. Vidalot at his ordination as a Protestant pastor, give a vivid picture of the religious condition of France to-day. They furnish still further evidence that France herself realises that Romanism as a national religion has been tried and found wanting, and that she must find a faith purer and higher or perish. Let us hear first the ex-priests:—

Our country, which is slowly working out its scientific, political, and social evolution, is at the same time struggling in a religious and moral crisis from which must issue either death or life. What is wanting, in the religious and moral sphere, to the France

of to-day is an ideal. The soul of the nation finds itself stifled between the negations of its unbelievers and the superstitions of its "faithful." The churches seem to have lost the ear of the people. The freethinkers, on the other hand, make equally vain efforts to conquer the masses. People cannot live on negations. Life cannot be got out of nothing.

But now a new generation of witnesses is rising. These are the ex-priests, the "escaped" from the Roman Church. Science has freed their religion, criticism has made them enfranchised believers. They call to the people and the people run to hear them; the popular heart thrills in the presence of men who have renounced the privileges of their sacerdotal caste to make themselves humble and obscure amongst the disinherited of this world. How is it that these "unfrocked ones," formerly so despised, have become popular? Because they have found under the ashes of a multitude of *credos*, beneath the falsities of their clerical education, the living bread that has come down from heaven, that ideal of righteousness, brotherhood, and religion which France needs. The people applaud because they feel passing through them the same new breath of the Spirit which

is moving these "enfranchised of the sacristy."

What is now going on amongst the working classes both of town and country is the best evidence of this. At Guise, for example, more than three thousand hearers came together for three days in succession to manifest in favour of religious reform. The result has clearly shown that the ex-priests have received a providential mission for the moral and religious elevation of France.

They speak to the people of that living God who is the author of nature, and at the same time the Conscience of our conscience, of that Eternal Love, of that Heavenly Father who is revealed in Jesus Christ. It is no new gospel they proclaim; it is the original and authentic Gospel of Christ. They believe at the same time that a new revelation is dawning in the soul of the people; for it is in this soul of the people that the immutable principles of Christianity are working out their results. The Divine Word is here uttering itself to our day.

The statement of M. Vidalot is in a less hopeful strain. Its significance lies in the testimony it offers of the des-

perate pass to which Romanism has brought religion in France.

Catholic France has become almost infidel. There are, it is true, here and there believing districts, but these become more and more rare. The spirit of incredulity, of negation, of mockery, continually gains ground, and if this goes on France will soon be quite void of faith. In detaching itself from the Catholic system the nation is detaching itself from God Himself. Having no personal faith, destitute of the Divine Word, which is the strength of the Reformed Church, the country, after having pulled down, is unable to build up. From Catholicism it has gone further and further toward scepticism. It is the most grievous calamity that can happen to a nation. Amongst peoples as amongst individuals the religious sentiment is *par excellence* the vital organ, the active principle of all national and individual energy. Both in civil and in directly religious affairs, it is the source at once of hardihood, of initiative, and of courage, and at the same time of that sentiment of order, that respect for law, which is the real safeguard of liberty.

The Reformed Church in France has the

misfortune of not being known. A public opinion, deeply rooted, cleverly developed, and widely spread, represents it as a revolted sect, without faith, without patriotism even, a kind of occult society, directed by the devil himself. I am exaggerating nothing here. In Catholic schools children are brought up with a horror of the name Protestant. The people have no idea of the treasures of religious faith and of national energy concealed under this name. It is this which explains the small number of conversions to Protestantism. The Protestant spirit, we are told, is spreading; but it spreads in a corrupt form. It works as a ferment, as a dissolvant, but owing to the prevailing ignorance of its true nature, it fails to become a tree under which the birds of heaven may gather.

The Catholic masses are not moved because they know nothing of religious matters, and because also these matters appear to them to be secondary. The class that is really shaken is the clergy. And this because an interior personal faith has become an imperious necessity to a modern mind that reflects, and that is also really religious. Men are getting tired of the yoke, because under it one finds only an

intellectual and religious idleness. It is here that you have that germ of a new religious life which I realised as a priest myself, and which a multitude of other priests are now experiencing. It is here that we have the beginning of a genuine revival. When these ideas have once taken possession of a soul they never leave it. They are incompatible with the absolute authority of the Church, and sooner or later they are bound to enfranchise the conscience and to bring it into direct relation with God.

XXIV.

A PAGE OF HISTORY.

The following glimpse behind the scenes is given us by M. du Bellay, formerly a priest and professor of philosophy, in an address which he has published during his candidature for a seat in the French Senate:—

It is twenty-two years ago since I left the Roman Church, because my conscience refused to continue teaching a doctrine in which I no longer believed. In 1869-70 I was present at the Vatican Council as attaché to Mgr. Guibert, late Archbishop of Paris, at that time Archbishop of Tours. In the third congregation of the Council, Cardinal Pecci, to-day Pope Leo XIII., declared that "it was necessary to get hold of the legislatures in order to subdue the peoples." I published this statement in the *Siecle* in May, 1892, under the title, "A Page of History," and although I cited witnesses who were then living no one replied to me.

The day on which the doctrinal infallibility of the Roman Pontiff was proclaimed, Cardinal Manning, then Archbishop of Westminster, exclaimed, "The human Governments have now nothing to do but to bow in submission." In the same third congregation it was urged that it was above all things necessary to get the standing armies into the Roman power, and as that was not possible all at once it was resolved to multiply higher schools in order to secure a succession of young men trained by the Church of the Vatican, for service in the Army. The programme of 1869-70 has been followed. It has issued in France in the Dreyfus *affaire*, in which one sees right through the hand of the Roman Church.

CONCLUSION.

We may now bring this series of testimonies to a close, though there is a vast deal more of similar character that might be added. The impression made by these pages on the minds of impartial readers will, we imagine, be in no degree lessened by the fact that they contain nothing that can be described as sensational. Here are no *chroniques scandaleuses*, none of the piquant "revelations" from monastery or convent which have so often fed the literature of the gutter. We have here simply chapters from the lives of honest men, who speak of what they have known and felt. Their standpoints, it will be seen, are widely different. Some look back to the Roman Church with a lingering affection, and do not spare their words of appreciation for much they have found in her. Others burn with a fiery wrath at the wrongs endured at her hands.

But one and all concur in this, that they have found her finally impossible. What also is not less evident, and even more significant, is that the experiences and conclusions of these *evadés* are those of an immense multitude behind of Roman ecclesiastics who feel equally the cruelty of the yoke, but remain at their posts because they see no way of escape. Nothing, perhaps, stands out with more damning clearness as an indictment of Rome than what is here revealed of her system of clerical recruiting. Beginning with a hideous child slavery which robs the early years of life of all their brightness, the system ends in the extinction of the victim's manhood. Its finished product is a creature bound to the service of the Church, not so much by affection for it, as by the consciousness of absolute inaptitude for any really human calling. The tyranny of Rome could not, indeed, be better illustrated than by what is transpiring as we write. Dr. Hermann Schell, the distinguished Catholic professor of Wurzburg, from whose earnest words of warning to

Catholicism we have already quoted, is at the present moment being crushed under the heel of the power with which he has dared to remonstrate. The works by which he has so profoundly stirred Catholic Germany have been placed by Rome on the Index Expurgatorius; the faithful have been forbidden under severe ecclesiastical penalties to read them; and this venerable author, despite his earlier protestations and the enthusiastic support accorded him by all that was most enlightened amongst his co-religionists, has finally succumbed to ecclesiastical terrorism, and promised to bring his books into line with Ultramontane orthodoxy.

It is a pitiful spectacle, but it is also an object-lesson of the first importance. English Protestants especially have here an admirable opportunity of studying Rome in her true colours. In this last act she stands self-revealed and self-advertised. In face of the nineteenth century she brands independent thinking as a crime; she declares her policy as one which compels her subordinates to

swallow their own deepest convictions, and which makes their positions tenable only on condition of declaring things they do not believe, and of keeping silence on the themes they hold vital.

It is indeed a grim and grinding despotism, and the most religious minds of France, Germany and Italy are, as these pages show, groaning under its pressure and seeking some way of escape. Our ancestors found the way three centuries ago, and with the discovery set out on a career of new, uninterrupted and marvellous progress. With all this history behind us, and with the fresh history now making before our eyes, we are, however, now being coolly invited to replace the yoke on our shoulders. We have too much faith in the good sense of our countrymen to doubt what the reply will be.

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